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20 key questions you should be asking your Web hosting company

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In with the in crowd

I rarely think of myself as an old fogey (I'll be 38 by the time you read this), but occasionally I wonder if that's what I'm turning into.

These days I find myself irritated by lots of little things – fare-dodgers, chewing gum on the pavement, Chris Tarrant – that sort of thing.

Computers are responsible for some of the annoying late-'90s phenomena. Like getting a wrong-way-round apostrophe when I type '99 and rock 'n' roll. I had to specify each of those apostrophes, and at least two software programs will have tried to turn them around before they are printed.

And the assaults on the language with the euphemisms for software like 'killer apps' (often an appropriate term) and 'solutions' (which usually turn out to be nothing of the sort).

But of all the irritants I encounter these days, none is more infuriating than the Internet snob who's been online since 1993. This person believes all Web sites should be accessible to 286 computers with Mosaic browsers, and will be deeply offended if you use capital letters in email. They'll be big on conspiracy theories and know all about Roswell.

Now, I can put up with idiosyncrasies, but there's one prevailing attitude that hacks me off – many of these nutters resent ordinary people's participation in the Net. It's like recent converts are proof of the exclusive club's drop in standards. For them, mass-market availability is the worst thing to happen to the Web, and they perpetuate the myth that it's all far too technical for the rest of us.

If you find yourself feeling miffed about the bloke next door buying a bigger computer and going online for free, lighten up. There's probably a lot you can teach him. Being at the vanguard of the Internet is far more rewarding than skulking back into your bedroom to discuss the evils of Freeserve on Internet Relay Chat.

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Editor

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Subscriptions and back issues

www.internet-magazine.com/subscribe
(01858) 435 338 (subscriptions)
(01858) 468 888 (back issues)
8.30am to 9.30pm weekdays and
10am to 6pm weekends
Fax: (01858) 435 958 (24 hours)

Print and digital repro **Cradley Print**
Warley, West Midlands B64 6AB

News trade distribution **Lorraine Russell, Frontline** (01733) 555 161

emap active

©1999 Emap Active Ltd
ISSN 1355-6428

Subscription rates

Annual subscription rates: £37.20 UK; £44.75 airmail to Europe; £39.35 Eire; £64.99 airmail to US and Canada; £67.49 Airmail to rest of world. Subscriptions Hotline: (01858) 435 338 Fax: (01858) 435 958 Or write to Internet Subscriptions, Tower House, Sovereign Park, Market Harborough, Leics LE16 9EF

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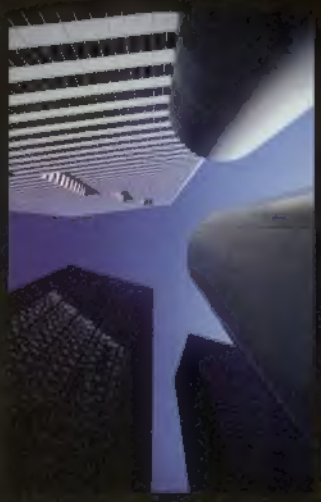

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ISPs liable for content

Judge decides providers can be sued over content

A ruling by a judge in London could open the floodgates for libel cases against Internet service providers.

In a case brought by a physicist who claimed he had been libelled in a Usenet newsgroup, Mr Justice Morland decided Demon Internet can be sued over messages sent through its Usenet news servers. Demon argued that it could not be held responsible for what people say on its servers, just as BT can't be sued for abusive phone calls made over its network (called the common carrier defence).

But Judge Morland decided that Demon can be sued just as a newspaper can be sued for reprinting libellous comments made by a third party. This could set a legal precedent. If you host a chat service on your site, you and your ISP could be sued for libel if anyone using the service makes a nasty remark.

David Furniss of Demon's parent company, Scottish Telecom, warned: "This potentially opens up the Internet industry to millions of similar, unjustified complaints."

"Pending Demon's appeal, there is scope for abuse by complainants," said Sarah Whalley, solicitor in IT and online law at Field Fisher Waterhouse.

"I think ISPs will have to respond to complaints quickly. Smaller ISPs aren't going to be able to take legal advice every time, so they will probably err on the side of caution. Some might even decide that services like Usenet aren't worth the hassle, and drop them."

Nicholas Lansman of the Internet Service Providers Association wants a change in the law.

"We're setting up a meeting with ministers and we've written to the DTI to register our concern. This might mean changes to the Defamation Act of 1996, but we'll be waiting for the appeal and we'll be briefing everyone properly. Our next legal forum will be looking at how the industry can proceed," he stated

Demon Internet is appealing against the decision.

www.demon.net

We think everybody on the Internet is lovely. Please don't sue!

OUR WEB SITE

Ultimate Web design challenge

Designers take on the Web site for the magazine that reviews Web sites

***Internet Magazine* has** launched a tough new Web design challenge – to redesign and overhaul the magazine's own Web site.

Four up and coming Web design agencies are taking on the task. Aspect Group (**www.aspect-group.co.uk**) has produced Web sites for Baileys and Total Publishing. Clockwork Web (**www.clockworkweb.com**) includes Hi Tec and Carlton among its clients. Flg21 (**www.flg21.com**) is responsible for the Coopers & Lybrand and Slush Puppie sites. SP New Media (**www.spnewmedia.co.uk**) has produced Web sites for Sky Television and Charles Schwab.

The design agencies will submit their concepts and working pages before a favourite site is chosen. *Internet Magazine* has assembled a suitably prestigious panel of judges to perform this imposing task.

The list includes Angus *Rough Guide to the Internet* Kennedy, Ben Christie, head of new media at New PHD, Matt Townend, UK marketing manager of UUNET, John Ousby, creative director at Ginger Online and Roger Green, MD of EMAP Online.

OVERHEARD THIS MONTH

"If you're a con artist and you are not on the Internet, you should be sued for malpractice." A spokesperson for the States Security Regulator, quoted on the BBC's *Business Breakfast*

Oftel lets the free ISPs off the hook

No changes in call revenue split before August 2001

Free Internet service providers can breathe a collective sigh of relief this month. Oftel, the telecommunications regulator, has declared it will not be making any major changes to the phone charges structure until August 2001 at the earliest. The announcement comes in a consultation document published after BT complained that the current set up was being exploited by the free ISPs.

Competing telcos have to use BT if they want to use a local call rate service. For generating this call revenue, BT pays other telcos 58 per cent of the cost of the call. BT argued that the ever-increasing number of subscribers to the free ISP services was putting a strain on the 0845 local call rate number and asked for a reduction of this payment.

The free ISPs argued that BT should actually get less money because it was they, not BT, who had generated the extra call revenue.

But Oftel has proposed a new system of call charges, with different rates for the different levels of service offered by content providers, service providers and free ISPs.

The price of calls to some ISPs might drop below the current local call rate, and ISPs currently charging a monthly fee will be able to switch to a 'free' service using higher call charges.

"Internet service providers and their supporting telephone networks should be able to vary the prices they charge for a call – reflecting the level of service they can provide to their customers," said David Edmonds, director general of Oftel.

www.oftel.org.uk

BROWSERS

ISPs amble into the IE5 era

The full version of Microsoft's Internet Explorer 5 was released over a month ago, but its introduction hasn't been an earth-shattering event. Perhaps we're all used to new browser launches, or maybe IE5 isn't that different to what went before.

Millions of people have already downloaded the new version from the Web, but it'll take time before it catches up and overtakes IE4. One important factor will be the time it takes ISPs to include IE5 on their new user CDs. Freeserve had IE5 on its connection CD within a week of the 18 March launch.

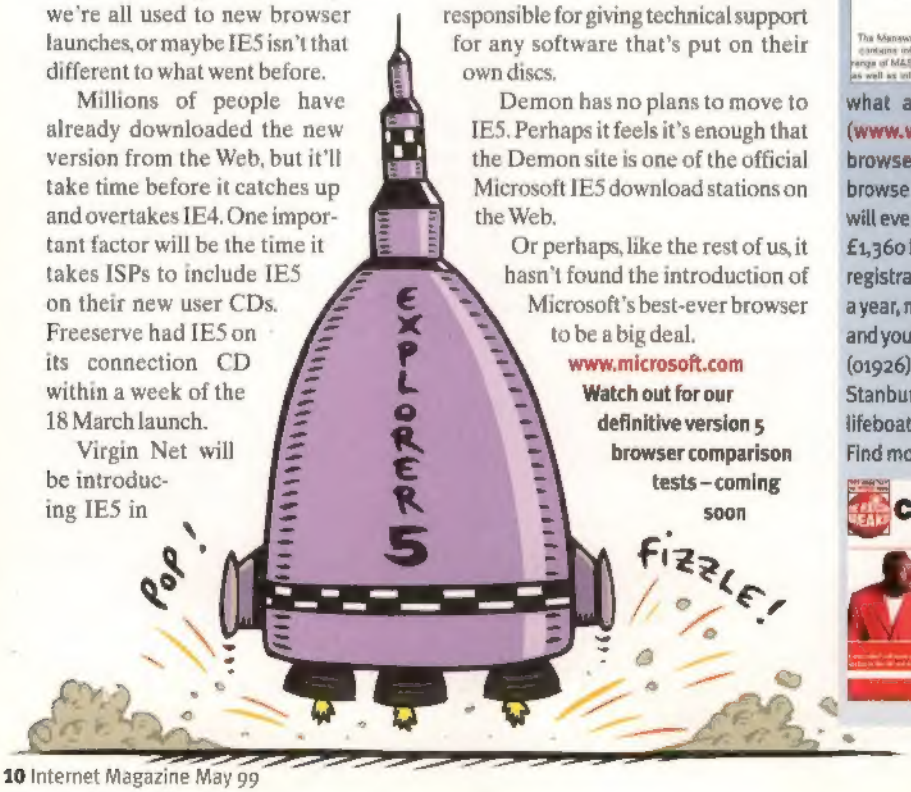
Virgin Net will be introducing IE5 in June or July. It says the browser is easy to customise, but wants to look in detail at the new version of Outlook Express bundled with the software. ISPs are responsible for giving technical support for any software that's put on their own discs.

Demon has no plans to move to IE5. Perhaps it feels it's enough that the Demon site is one of the official Microsoft IE5 download stations on the Web.

Or perhaps, like the rest of us, it hasn't found the introduction of Microsoft's best-ever browser to be a big deal.

www.microsoft.com

Watch out for our definitive version 5 browser comparison tests – coming soon



News just in...

Barclays (www.barclays.co.uk) has announced it's to launch a free ISP combining unlimited free access with online banking and stockbroking... Get used to the phrase Web wise. **The BBC** (www.bbc.co.uk) has launched a new campaign called just that to help people get the most from the Internet (the first programme is on 26 April at 7.30pm on BBC2)... Meanwhile, the first contract has been signed for a third party to receive content from the **Beeb** site (www.beeb.com). The recipient? Microsoft (www.msn.co.uk)... As a result of the Budget (www.budget99.co.uk), **the Government** is launching a £1.7bn scheme to make the nation a leader in IT – it's giving people the chance to borrow money for a home computer from their employers as a tax-free benefit... **HostNet** (www.netinvest.co.uk) – part of NetInvest – has launched a service called **PremiumNet** (www.premiumnet.co.uk), which lets users connect to individual Web sites using a premium rate phone number, without using conventional IP address protocols or an ISP (making it four times faster, the company claims). Could this be the e-quivalent of 0898 numbers?... **The Royal Mail** has introduced a service called ViaCode (www.viacode.com). It's the first secure e-commerce document delivery service for UK business. The Royal Mail is so sure of its 128-bit encryption that it's guaranteeing its reliability for up to £100,000. That'll buy a lot of stamps... The Net could be a faster place in 2001. **Global Crossing** (www.globalcrossing.bm) is set to build a $500m cable, dubbed Atlantic Crossing II. The new 2.5 terabits per second pipe represents an increase of more than 25 times the current capacity... **Marks & Spencer** (www.marks-and-spencer.co.uk) is set to launch a massive online shopping presence. The move will tie in with a £20 million advertising campaign to bring customers back to M&S (Modems & Surfers – anyone?)... If the introduction of IE5 hasn't got you fired up, what about this? **Tim Berners-Lee** has launched Amaya (www.w3c.org) – a new browser that lets you browse and edit at the same time. It's open code and the Net guru will even let you sell it on if you make improvements to it... Buy a £1,360 Internet starter pack from **Interactive Web** (domain name registration, five professionally designed Web pages, hosting for a year, multiple email forwarding and search engine submission) and you'll get a 350Mhz PC and a 56K modem absolutely free. Call (01926) 450 099... A **motorbike-mad** Internet businessman, Chris Stanbury, will attempt to ride his Kawasaki to a record number of lifeboat stations this summer in a bid to raise money for the RNLI. Find more about the journey and pledge cash on his Web site at www.cravenplan.co.uk/mll.htm... And finally, congratulations to **Comic Relief** for raising £400,000 on the Internet (at www.rednoseday.beeb.com). It *was* the record breaker and it's still accepting donations.

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OVERHEARD THIS MONTH

...e changed the world ... said that in 1994 and 1995. What ... said from 1996 through 1999 was coast along, riding the wave

...mie Zawinski, Netscape veteran, explains why he's resigning

INDUSTRY MOVES

Mirror lures Virgin man

David Clarke leaves Virgin to take on Mirror Group ISP

The Mirror Group has swooped in and snatched Virgin Net CEO David Clarke to head up its new free ISP.

He joined on 19 April as MD of New Media and Interactive Services. The sudden move has caused major ripples at Virgin, which has not yet found a successor and has broadened its search beyond the UK.

The Mirror Group tempted Clarke with a 'generous' financial package and a job that Clarke has described as "a great new challenge".

The appointment is crucial for the *Mirror*, as it plans to go head-to-head with the *Sun*, which launched its free ISP service, CurrentBun.com, on 30 March. The *Sun* says it had more than 10,000 requests for information in just two days.

The Mirror Group needs to move quickly, as there are already more than 50 free ISPs. It needs to make the most of all the associated e-commerce opportunities and is expected to launch at the end of April.

Clarke joined Virgin Net in June 1997. There are no figures on the uptake of its free service so far, but Virgin Net is planning to control its growth as a free ISP in order to maintain its levels of service.

www.mirror.co.uk

Clarke: no time for reflection at the *Mirror*

SITE NOMINATIONS

Vote for your favourite site

Have you nominated a site for a UK Web Award yet? *Internet Magazine* has joined Yell to bring you the UK Web Awards, and we need you to help find the best of British Web sites.

Sites can be nominated for the following 10 categories at the Yell Web site (at www.yell.co.uk).

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A Site Of The Year will be chosen from the category winners.

There is also the *Internet Magazine* Readers' Choice category. Fill in the coupon below and send it to us before 7 May 1999. You could win tickets to the glitzy Awards bash in London or a free subscription to the magazine.

Internet Magazine Readers' Choice

Win tickets to the awards ceremony

There is also a special *Internet Magazine* Readers' Choice category. Use this form to vote for your favourite overall site. One lucky winner will be drawn at random, with the special prize of two tickets to the awards ceremony at London Television's studios this summer. The winner and nine other voters picked at random will receive a year's free subscription to *Internet Magazine*.

So fill in the URL of your favourite Web site, tell us why you like it, photocopy or cut out this form and send it to: Internet Magazine Readers' Choice, Yell UK Web Awards, Ange. House, 338-346 Goswell Road, London EC1V 7QP, to arrive before 7 May, 1999.

Use this form to vote for your favourite site for the Internet Magazine Readers' Choice category. Nominations for all other categories must be made via the Yell Web site at www.yell.co.uk

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Research Focus
Europe vs United States

Shifting demographics favour Europe in the battle to dominate the Internet

The Internet has reached critical mass in the US. Over two thirds of all households are online, and over a third of the population have Internet access. In Europe, while there has been a huge surge online in the last year, the penetration is predominantly in the workplace. But we're next in line to be the Internet's hotbed.

According to the ninth GVU Web survey (a profile of Internet users conducted last April), the European profile in 1998 was close to the US user profile of 1994. It's thought the European experience will mirror the US experience, but are we really four years behind?

While there are fewer bums on seats at the Internet show in Europe, the bums are the same as those in the US (*slightly smaller, surely – Ed*).

The bums on seats in Europe are the same as the bums in the US.

Europeans tend to be sceptical about new technologies, preferring their JS cousins to do the testing. And Europeans are anxious to set procedures and standards before embarking on e-commerce. A survey of Europe's top CEOs by PriceWaterhouseCoopers found that 55 per cent believe cross-border e-commerce needs global standards to protect privacy, security, authentication and dispute resolution. As yet these standards are not in place.

The US share of the Internet pie is shrinking every year – by 2003, over half of the content will be non-English and will come from outside the US – but the majority of speculation and research on the European Internet market is still given in the context of US commercial investment opportunities.

US companies bit the e-commerce bullet early and are hoping to use the same tactics in Europe. To do that, they need to understand the market and the people. These US companies are sponsoring massive research projects while Europeans stand at the side and wait for the results.

Forbes magazine conducted a study on European market with a view to identifying the most lucrative countries for investment. The study looked at ancillary factors – such as the extent of credit card ownership, penetration of mobile phones, national telecommunications policies and annual incomes – and subsequently rated each country.

PC penetration in Europe was 352 per 1,000 compared to 580 per 1,000 in the US. There were discrepancies in credit card ownership with 148 per 1,000 in the US and 39.31 per 1,000 in Europe. The average cost of going online in Europe is $49.32, compared to $34.87 in the US. Taking the average annual disposal income of both continents into account, there is double indemnity here. Average annual income in the US is almost $30,000 while in Europe it's only $14,801.

But the fear of an Americanization of European culture is enough to send most European companies scrambling to the HTML boards. When Europeans do kick in, they're likely to remain loyal to their neighbours with whom they've traded and fought for centuries. With 290 million people living in the US and roughly 385 million living in Europe, the possibility of de-Americanization of the Internet is palpable.

● This research is provided by Sorcha Ni hEilidhe, Internet trend spotter and editor of *Nua Internet Surveys*, the number one resource for online trend analysis. She can be contacted at sorcha@nua.ie or www.nua.ie/surveys

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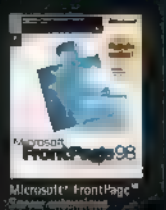

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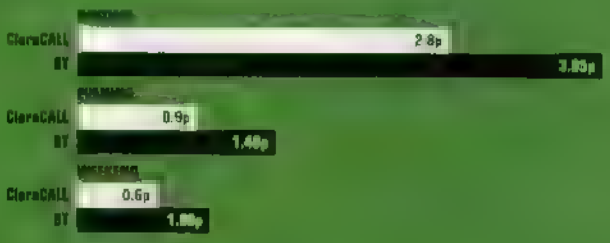

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Melissa's a bad mother...

New direction in virus development attacks world's email servers

Within a day of its release, the Melissa virus caused Microsoft and Intel to suspend email while they sorted out their defences. Viral mutations were found within a week and Melissa was identified as the first in a new line of macro viruses.

Melissa arrives in an email with the subject line "Important message from" followed by a name, probably somebody you know. When you open the attachment that comes with the message, the virus instructs Microsoft Outlook to send email to the first 50 addresses in your address book. These emails pass the virus on.

A variant of the virus, Melissa.a, has a blank subject line to bypass any filtering you put in place. And for those who watch their Word files but nothing else, the variant, Papa, hides inside Excel files.

Word macro viruses are common. Most can be stopped by selecting the disable macros option when you open a document in Microsoft Word 97 or Word 2000. But Melissa can be immune to this precaution.

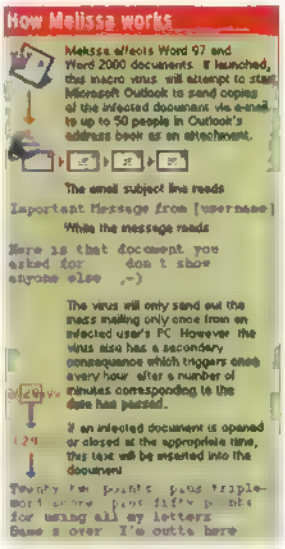
The virus is quite benign to the user, but it's not choosy about which of your documents it sends out in its email push, so there are security implications, and sometimes it adds a few words from Bart Simpson into whatever you're writing, but otherwise it leaves you alone. The main focus of its attack is on email servers, which get swamped by 50 spams at once.

This is a new direction for virus development and a clever way of propagating – a fact that hasn't gone unnoticed in the world of virus creation. Virus writers all over the world are crouched over their keyboards working on variations of Melissa.

So watch out. Don't trust any Word or Excel files you receive by email. If you haven't got a virus protection program, get one – it's the best line of defence. Once you've got one, make sure it's set to check incoming email attachments and that you keep it up to date.

For more Melissa details try the Computer Emergency Response Center at www.cert.org or the Melissa help center at www.avertlabs.com.

Don't open emails from people you think you know – it might be Melissa!



MUSIC ON THE WEB

Cough up for your music on the Web

If you've got music on your Web site, you might soon have to start paying a licence fee, unless you composed and recorded it yourself. The Performing Rights Society (PRS), which issues licences for music played over the radio and in public places, has turned its attention to the Internet.

And it isn't just big Internet players like the BBC and Virgin that the PRS is chasing. "People are becoming mini-broadcasters in their own right," says Gavin Robertson of the MCPS-PRS Alliance. "Small-time broadcasting is the same. The Internet is the ultimate leveller. People building sites from their bedrooms have the same access to the same audience as Microsoft."

Even record companies can get into trouble for putting clips of their own music on the Web. If the company doesn't own the full rights to the music, the artists lose broadcasting income. And it's the artists that the people who the PRS and the MCPS (Mechanical Copyright Protection Society) are trying to protect. "We're defending the rights of composers and musicians, many of whom don't make a lot of money," says Robertson.

The PRS recognises that licensing for the Internet is more complicated than older technologies, such as radio. The organisation has introduced a system of trial licences, costing from £200 a year for short clips to a maximum of £1,000 for major radio stations and other continuous productions.

www.musicrights.co.uk

DOMAIN NAMES

Internic site is taken off Web

Network Solutions has caused a storm by removing the Internic Web site. The company has also angered Net organisations by offering competing Internet services.

The Internic system was previously used to check the availability of domain names. Companies will now have to do this from the Network Solutions Web site (at www.netsol.com)

In a bid to reposition itself as an Internet services company, Network Solutions sent an email to domain names which advertise their own services. This has been described as an abuse of its position as the .com administrator.

Michael Roberts, CEO of ICANN, said: "Doing it without any announcement or explanation doesn't seem like an intelligent way to treat the community."

A spokesperson for Network Solutions said it was a way to "consolidate our various Web sites and registrar function".

www.internic.net

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OVERHEARD THIS MONTH

"In the very near future, it'll be a human right for people all of the world to have access to the Internet."

TimeLine

30 April

MAFF Today sees the end of one of the Government's rare forays into electronic democracy, as the email debate on the implications of the Ministry of Agriculture's Rural White Paper draws to a close. Check out www.ruralnet.org.uk rwp

18-19 May

The European Union is developing a ratings system for Internet content. It'll be under the guidance of a self-appointed group called INCORE, headed by the Internet Watch Foundation. The group will be holding its first meeting in Brussels to discuss ways to prevent the spread of illegal content online. You can register at www.qlinks.net/comdocs/invite May.html or read www2.echo.lu/iap

17-21 May

With a bit of imagination and a lot of money, libraries could be the key to the development of the information society that the Government talks about so much. So no doubt it'll be sending someone to Crete on expenses for the International University Library's conference on the future of libraries in human communication. Me please! http://educate.lib.chalmers.se/IATUL

Late May

If you're going to San Francisco, check out the future of online video. Tranz-Send claims it can send compressed, copyright-protected, DVD-quality movies over the Net. Video on demand... now where have we heard that before? www.tranz-send.com

All expenses paid

This month's Net conferences, courses and seminars

COMPAREX

Comparex e-commerce seminar

A series of one-day seminars exploring the opportunities of e-commerce. It's free, but book early to avoid disappointment.
27 April
Reebok Stadium, Bolton
29 April
Dublin
Sarah.lott@comparex.co.uk
(0161) 877 3901

How to make big profits on the Net

A one-day workshop for those running SMEs and wanting to make/save some money on the Net. The seminar costs £233.83, with discounts for multiple or early bookings.
26 April
Leeds
27 April
Manchester
28 April
Birmingham
11 May
Newcastle
(0800) 458 5004
Sales@newvision.uk.com

Building an effective Web site

This four-day course covers the creation of dynamic Web sites that are easy to navigate. So, thinking caps on for HTML, CGI, ASP, Java, JavaScript, VBScript and Dynamic HTML. Oh, and wallets out too for the £1615.63.
27-30 April and 18-21 May
Cirencester
27-30 April
Edinburgh
11-14 May and 25-28 May
Holborn, London
(01285) 655 888
www.qatraining.com

The Internet explored

Find out how to get the best from the Net for £170.38.
4 May
Old Street, London
training@informed-ibs.com
(0171) 282 1940
www.informed-ibs.com/training

Internet technology fundamentals

Learn how to set up network connections and compare cost/benefit options. Find out the services that are commonly available on the Net and discover the benefits of electronic mail. Getting to grips with the basics will cost you £1,227.88 for the three days training.
5-7 May
Holborn, London
(01285) 655 888
www.qatraining.com

HTML – basic course

Get the lowdown on this common Web site design language for £287.88.
5 May
Move up a level to Advanced HTML for £287.88.
6 May
Marketing on the Internet. £346.63 buys you an overview of e-commerce.
11 May
Old Street, London
training@informed-ibs.com
(0171) 282 1940
www.informed-ibs.com/training

Internet technology fundamentals

Training Courses QA

A one-day seminar about technologies.
Thames Valley
(01285) 655 888
www.qatraining.com

Promoting your Web site online

Got a site? Need some visitors? £346.63 buys you some answers.
12 May
Effective searching on the Web – half-day course about search engines, Web crawlers, spiders and robots for £170.38
19 May
Old Street, London
training@informed-ibs.com
(0171) 282 1940
www.informed-ibs.com/training

Internet World '99

Internet World

If you attend only one Internet event this year – attend Internet World 99. It consists of three days of exhibitions and free seminars. It's broad enough to show how all the converging technologies relate, yet deep enough to show how each works. Entry is free if you register beforehand. It features ISPs such as Freeserve, plus BA, BT Microsoft and *Internet Magazine*.
25-27 May
Earl's Court Two, London
(01203) 426 497
www.internetworld.co.uk

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Understand the common vulnerabilities and security holes in browser technology so you can defend yourself from attacks on your networks. £1,286.63 tells you everything from encryption and authentication to digital signatures.
26-28 May
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www.qatraining.com

Bug of the Month: not even Linux is immune...

With more people turning to Linux for their Web services, all security problems with the operating system have to be taken seriously. This month's star bug involves a subtle but dangerous problem with the installation of Slackware's Linux variant.

The problem arises when Slackware Linux (in versions up to and including 3.6 – later versions are fine) is installed from a network drive with a network-enabled kernel – the default if you're running Web servers.

When the operating system is installed, it boots

slackware linux

up for the first time with a null root password – the first task is to reset this. Unfortunately, it starts its network services well before displaying any kind of login prompt.

Anyone who knows what they're looking for could identify your computer (it's loading software from the network, so it must be visible) and log in before you. While they wouldn't be able to do much damage to a newly installed system, they could easily install a trapdoor program. This would give them superuser access at a later date, and they'd be out before you even realised they were there.

While it might sound unlikely that anyone could spot an installation while it's happening, someone with access to your network could develop a program which 'sniffs' the network. The program would look for telltale packets and go to work to break in once Linux has been installed.

Fortunately, this problem doesn't emerge when booting and installing from a CD-ROM, so it won't affect a lot of new Linux users. But it does demonstrate that even Linux has its problems, whatever the benefits of open source development.

And if you plan to install Slackware Linux, do it from a local disk with no network connection.
www.slackware.com

Another great idea for 1999

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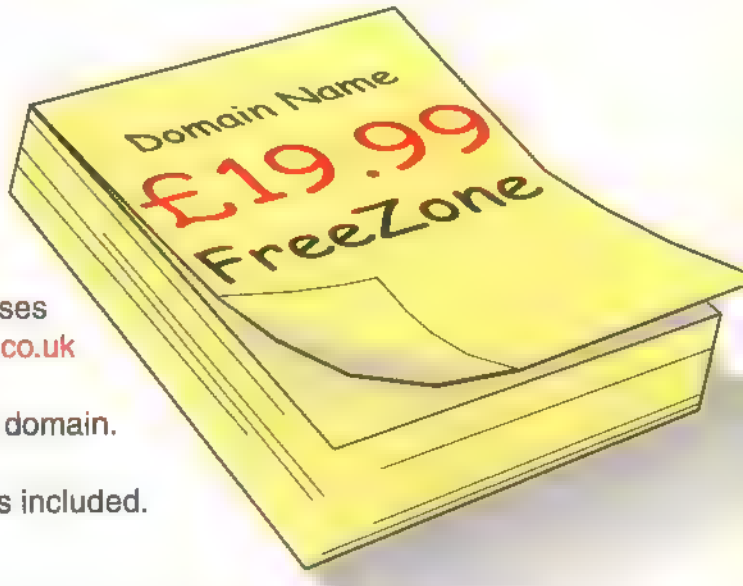

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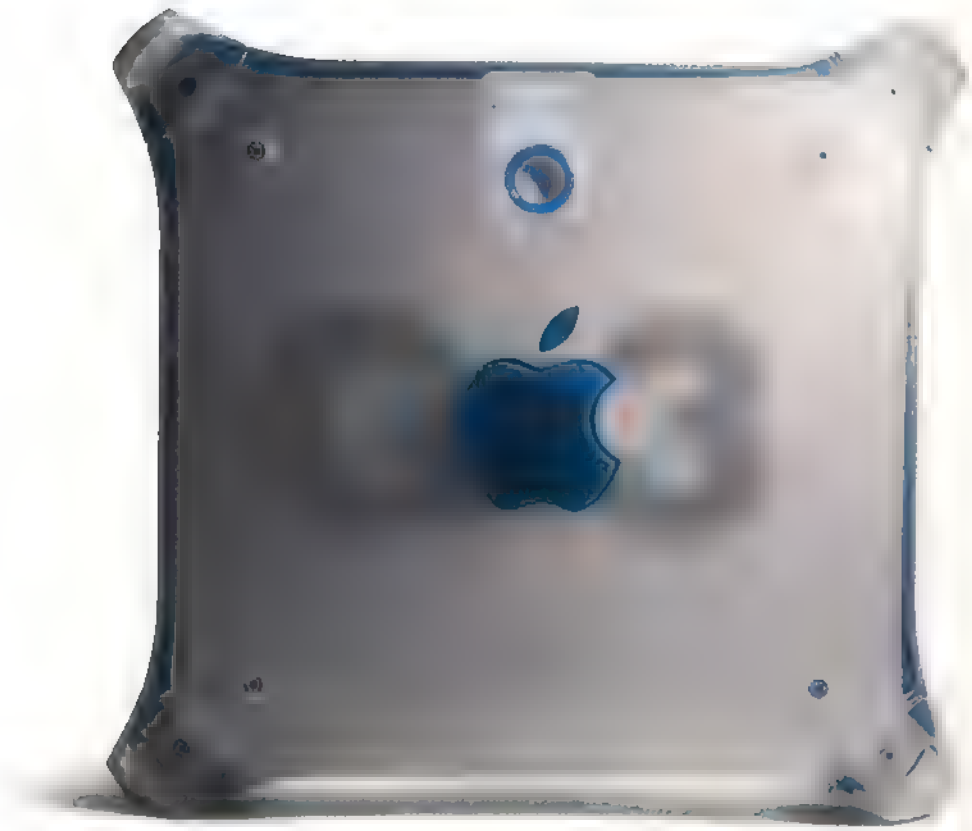
The new Power Macintosh G3.



The Power Macintosh has been completely reinvented. It has faster processors – up to 400 MHz – which outperform the fastest processors in high-end PCs.* It has built-in ATI RAGE 128 graphics accelerator, so it can run 3D graphics up to 47% faster than a PC decked out with an advanced add-in card. Plus there's up to a full gigabyte of memory and up to 100 GB of internal disk storage. The new Power Macintosh G3 gives you more PCI slots and more ways to connect to external devices, with built-in

** Based on BYTEmark integer index scores. Performance may vary depending on application and system configuration. † Apple suggested retail price of the base model, excluding VAT at 17.5% as at 01/09/99. Ex. VAT pricing is shown for business users only. Apple Resellers are free to set their own prices, therefore Apple Computer Reseller prices may vary from those shown.*

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Photography by Frank Rodgers

The Kable guy

William Heath, chairman of Kable Government Information, and founder of the Better Information-Age Government site

National and local government in the UK seems incapable of grasping the massive benefits the Net could bring. Mike Bracken talks to the man charged with bringing the bureaucrats out of the dark ages

An MP once told me that whenever computers and the computerisation of government was mentioned in Parliament in the '80s, backbenchers would make fun of the speaking MP by whirling their fingers around their heads, helicopter style. Discouraging, isn't it.

A decade and a change of Government later, the situation's looking much healthier. Tony Blair talks (a lot) about wiring up the nation's schools Peter Mandelson was trying to make our universities copy Silicon Valley. An e-envoy will be announced shortly, billed as a magical figure who'll whisk us off to an e-commerce utopia.

But, on closer inspection, the much-hyped information age is nowhere to be seen We can't interact with government. We can't claim benefits, fill in forms, vote, or check on the data it holds about us. A few small breakthroughs do nothing to hide the UK Government's inability to embrace the information age. And as it continues to foist outdated encryption, trusted third parties and privacy policies on us, you could be forgiven for thinking it doesn't even want to get on the bandwagon.

William Heath knows this. He quickly understood the radical changes required for government in the information age, and in 1990 founded Kable, a news and research company focused on IT in central and local government. He added the magazine *Government Computing* (www.governmentcomputing.com) to his portfolio before starting the Better Information Age Government project late last year

At its Parliamentary launch, as MPs, trade lobbyists and the press jostled for attention, it was clear that having someone on hand who understands all three groups is vital if government is to begin to understand the issues of the information age. When Heath spoke, everyone listened. And no one made helicopter-style gestures, which is a start.

Why do you find government's relationship with IT so interesting?

Government meeting IT is like an inanimate object being hit by a large force. IT's poorly understood, quite obscure and quite complicated. The core of Kable's market is research and intelligence, and that's increasingly Net delivered. We do marketing intelligence and we try to make people think differently. That's what BIG (www.big.kable.co.uk), the Better Information-Age Government Web site is about.

What's the aim of BIG?

We're trying to put government in the information age, to bring government to the Internet, if you like

What's stopping the Government from embracing the information age?

It's hard to think about that, for a lot of reasons. Officials, who are the best placed to work out the policies, don't like to think ahead to future elections. Politicians have to be preoccupied with their short-term survival. For IT and Internet companies, that's intellectually demanding to deal with. It's not like retail, where there's a shared aim, and everyone from the cleaner to the chairman knows it will be OK.

In government, the person at the working level has quite different priorities than the person setting policy

Ultimately it's something we're all involved in, so it's difficult to find a clear view and achieve those changes.

Many small Internet companies claim they have difficulty selling to the Government. Why is this?

Government has to buy IT using quite arduous procedures. IT has to be ➤

seen to be above board and it has to withstand scrutiny. And there's no great motivation for the Government to adopt e-commerce.

Yet you're pushing the Government to do this. Why?

If the Government switched to electronic processes for financial transactions, such as paying benefits, it could take a penny off the basic rate of tax.

It's difficult for small businesses to develop their good ideas. There has to be an infrastructure put in place first – the National Lottery is a model of that, as is the new National Insurance system that Andersen Consulting has put in for the DSS. But there has to be a strong balance sheet – the ability to earn up front. You can catch a cold, as Andersen has found out. You don't want to take a start-up into a project like that.

So how can small companies guide the Government, given that they can't spend on infrastructure?

Take Aztec. Tom Loosemore and Stefan Magdalinski have produced **www.upmystreet.com**. They've showed that, by taking an intelligent, Net oriented approach to a straightforward set of government publications, you can develop something customer-facing.

The Government has been talking about being customer-facing for a couple of years. The reality is that the structures of government aren't customer-facing at all. For the person in the street, the computerisation of government hasn't had any direct benefits at all yet. It's spending £6bn across the public sector, and it's difficult to see examples of an information age government that's helpful to people.

The National Lottery is the only example of the Government deciding to permit something and technology delivering it to the consumer. It's not the most noble thing IT will ever do for people. It works. People like it. They approve.

Has the election of the Labour Party had any effect?

There's been a big improvement since the general election. That seems to be the way it works when a new generation comes in. Ministers as users of PCs are about average, I'd guess. It doesn't matter if they can use a PC or not. Are they willing to change government to create better services, so it costs less and so people trust it again?

The reality at the receiving end of government services is that they're not terribly good. They fall a long way short of where we could be. There's probably around £10 billion of benefit fraud. Yet there's probably about £3.5 billion of unclaimed benefit. The service can't be working if you've got 3.5 billion quid you can't give away.

The quality of service is wrong, and the cost is out of kilter. The amount of money the State is taking off us is vast. In an information age, consumers' attitudes will be more knowing.

What should Government do in the short term?

If it spotted the need for open government, that would be terrific. **www.open.gov** is useful. You can find out useful facts, but it's no substitute for enlightened information age consumers. Open.gov might not be innovative, but it's a necessary first step.

"The service can't be working if you've got 3.5 billion quid you can't give away."

So what's your long-term, utopian vision?

In my White Paper in October '97, I said we needed a government that offers really good services to people, that would cost far less, maybe 20 per cent of people's income instead of 50 per cent. We need a government that raises people's trust, particularly over areas like privacy. That's my utopian vision.

Privacy and trust. Can we have both of these when dealing with the Government electronically?

Using information well and respecting people's privacy are not opposing ideas. We're talking about having a good information policy which is well applied. We need to re-establish what information government needs for it to conduct transactions with us.

It'll get interesting when online services are everywhere. People will have to identify themselves electronically, and the Government will have to be confident that it can establish, electronically, what they're entitled to.

One of the reasons why government services are not as good as they could be, and why it's going to be so difficult to deliver e-government, is the quality of the information the Government holds. I'd guess that the vast majority of DSS data is wrong.

Yet the Government is pursuing encryption and e-commerce policies many feel are counter-productive.

I think sanity can prevail, but it doesn't seem to be happening. I can't see why the interests of consumers and business aren't being put first in a safe society – I can't see how you could come up with something like Trusted Third Parties.

What the DTI wants and what the security service wants is different. It's difficult for government to accept that people don't trust government. It's going to have to accept that.

Will the e-envoy appointment help?

In government, people respect head counts and budgets, and this person will have neither. But it's possible to be publicity friendly, so in one way it's highly encouraging. Maybe he or she can remove from the ointment the fly that is this TTP issue.

Where can we get more information, apart from Kable, of course?

Stand.org (**www.stand.org.uk**) is a brilliant example of how to lobby your MP in plain English.

You're analytical about the Government's performance. Do you like it as an institution?

I have a love/hate relationship with the machinery of State as it is. There's a lot of deeply unappealing individuals and corporate culture lying around Whitehall. But it is a heavy engine, a machine ill-suited to our present and future needs. The change needed to get us from where we are to where we should be will be quite traumatic. I'm not convinced that government is a caring employer who'll manage change well. im

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BT Stay in touch

mailbox

send your thoughts and comments on the Net industry to martynm@internet.emap.com

DACS and the Oftel line

Last year I took up BT's offer of installing a second line for Internet and fax use. After several days of wondering why my connection speed had dropped to 28.8Kbps, I noticed letters of complaint in *Internet Magazine* regarding DACS systems (December 1998 issue). I contacted BT and was told I'd be put on the DACS removal waiting list

I followed up my request some months later and was told it'd been cancelled. I put in another request to be removed, but this time BT told me that, because it doesn't guarantee data transmission, it isn't obliged to remove me from the DACS system

I contacted Oftel, which said although DACS should be capable of bit-rates up to 33.6k, BT doesn't specify a minimum rate. Furthermore, no requirements on data transmission currently exist. Consequently, there's nothing Oftel can do to help me.

I'm angry and disappointed that BT will knowingly install a system which reduces transmission speed and affects the quality of service, but does not tell the customer. For BT, slower transmission speeds mean the customer spending more time online, thus more gold for its coffers.

Stuart Blackhurst
stuart@webtrix.co.uk

Short calls

I'm in dispute with BT over hundreds of failed connections that have appeared on my bill. Some were voice calls, which were busy on the first attempt, but recorded as successful since the connection was held for over 30 seconds. I was charged 4.8p for each connection, and my bill was inflated from being charged for numerous simultaneous connections.

BT told me it'd monitor my line, and invited me to add up the number of disputed calls and deduct the cost from my bill – no arguments and no conditions.

It seems these free ISPs – who make a lucrative income from line charges – have a guaranteed bonus when their servers are busy or unable to cope with traffic. I hope these windfall profits are used to upgrade their systems.

There's an increased understanding of Internet and telephone-related issues, and I don't think it'll be long before Oftel investigates.

Gareth Bingham
Gareth Bingham\
@compu-serve.com

Talking Talk 21

I'd like to point out certain details which were incorrect in your free Web-based email article (March issue), which included Talk21.

You said people are unable to opt out of the Talk21 directory But at the end of the registration process, you can choose to opt out of the directory

Your feature also said there are no spam filters on Talk21. Again, this is factually incorrect. Talk21 blocks all known pornographers and spammers from sending messages to the Talk21 user base. In addition, we ensure that email circulars can't

be sent to more than 20 addresses. This applies to email sent by Talk21 users and incoming email from outside sources.

I hope this clarifies the features Talk21 offers to its users.

Alexa Clark
Head of online applications, BT
c/o melanie@bbpr.com

I was interested to read Bill Thompson's comments about lying when filling out Talk21's "somewhat intrusive" registration form Surely this'll become even more intrusive in time, as he'll be sent information based on an incorrect profile that's of absolutely no interest to him.

Nick Suckley
nick@media2 1.co.uk

Richard Baguley replies: There's a distinct lack of information on the Talk 21 site as to how these anti-spam features work or how spam messages are filtered.

We're all criminals

With regard to last month's news article on European Law and Web cacheing. The implications of Article Two are that any duplication of data, including temporary storage and cacheing, will be an offence. This means anyone using the Net is breaking the law, because browsers automatically store file data in the cache. If Article Two is passed, you could face arrest for simply checking your email. Home audio and video

Star Letter

About that kid...

I feel some defence of *Internet Magazine* is necessary after Daniel Vesma's outburst in last month's issue. First, is it a joke?

He claims to be a 15 year old ex-Linux user and Web designer. Shouldn't he be doing his GCSEs? And why does his degree start five months later than everyone else's?

He says an article in your magazine made young designers look like "little turds", but he's doing a good job of that himself.

More seriously, he said Times was dull and unprofessional. This is a recognised problem in Web design, but there is a solution

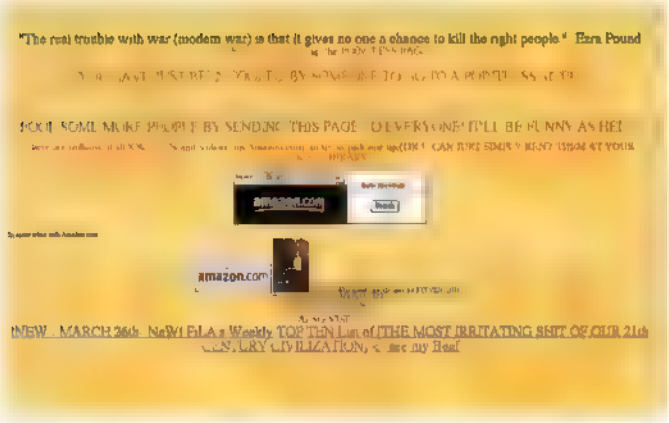
You can include different fonts on your site, but only version 4 browsers will see them – everyone else will get the default font – not a good option

The reliable fonts are Times New Roman, Courier and Arial (others fonts are not guaranteed to appear). Ignoring Courier (which is reserved for other uses), the only alternative is Arial, a sans

serif font. But, as every typographer knows, large quantities of text are easier to read using serif fonts, such as Times, because they allow the eye to follow the line

I consider Times to be a professional site font at least it'll be consistent and readable across all the browsers.

Anthony Butcher
tonybutcher@yahoo.com



If you've got a Net addiction problem, this site just might be the cure...

copying is also illegal under UK law, but it's not the sort of regulation that can be enforced

All of which questions the competency of Eurocrats – the ones that haven't already been sacked for incompetency, fraud and nepotism

Dr David Harrison
prospero@pncl.co.uk

An open letter to Bill Clinton

Dear Mr President

Internic was set up by the US Government to look after the registration of top-level domain names. It's supposed to be a non-profit making organisation, registering only top-level domain names.

We are a UK ISP and received an international emailshot, advising administrators of every registered domain name (there's around four million of them) to visit the new Internic Web site (www.internic.net). I was shocked and dismayed to see that Internic is selling Internet services on the site, including email addresses and domain names.

We feel that no domain registration organisation should be able to sell Internet services, particularly one that's supposed to be a non-profit making organisation

I'd like to make a formal complaint to you, Mr President, and I look forward to your reply

Shahbaz Akbar
shahbaz@softprog.net

Who needs the Betty Ford clinic?

I laughed when I came across the article on page 13 about Net addiction in your April issue (www.internetaddiction.com), which said the Get a life link was under construction. My colleague says the best cure he's found for Net addiction is at www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Stadium/7563/funshit.html

Julie Taylor
julie@vbc.net

It's as easy as EasyASP 3.1

I was pleased to see my program, EasyASP, as a hot download in your January issue. The version you reviewed and included in the CD-ROM was version 3.0 Since then, version 3.1 has been released. This includes updates, bug fixes and many new features, including an access database viewer and an FTP program. The wizards and functions are all working now.

Eric Banker
ebanker@gmu.edu

amazon.co.uk

● Mr Butcher is this month's winner of a £75 Amazon.co.uk voucher. **Every month our star letter wins £75 worth of Amazon vouchers to spend at the site.**

Amazon.co.uk is the UK's favourite Net bookstore. It offers a catalogue of more than 1.5 million titles, but it's far easier than shopping on the high street. You can search for books by author, title, subject or keyword. You can also browse in specific subject areas, buy gift certificates and send gift-wrapped books to friends and relatives. Check out the bestsellers and stay up to date on all the hottest titles. You can also save money – up to 40 per cent on some titles. Simply point your browser at www.amazon.co.uk

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Part of Internet Technology Group plc

Flaming angry

Flame mail originated in newsgroups and is on the increase. Richard Dinnick says it's time to stop giving novices a hard time. So tone down the content of your email – or else

People have always been rude to each other. It's a fact of life and we've all been provoked into four-letter words and hand gestures. So now that 50 per cent of Internet users in the UK are logging on specifically to send email, it's not surprising that flame mail (abusive email) is on the increase

Seasoned Net users don't suffer fools gladly, so newcomers have to learn the nuances of netiquette. And fast. Don't write in capitals, be as brief as possible and understand what ROFL means in a chat room (see **www.techweb.com/encyclopedia** for assistance). This seems at odds with people on the Net who like to think of themselves as part of a caring community

As a novice, I remember receiving one of those silly good luck totems and decided that, as a piece of harmless fun, I would send it on to my email contacts. These were pretty scarce back then, but I did have a few, including a guy whose site I'd been visiting. I had already emailed him about his content and thought he'd be amused by this novelty.

How wrong I was He sent me back a nasty email that threatened me with some arcane action if I did it again. Who the hell did he think he was? He had no idea how long I'd been connected to the Net or how old I was He was an American college boy majoring in 'Math', so I guess I shouldn't be too hard

The immediacy of email means people find themselves writing pretty much what they'd say This can lead to misunderstandings and even the Internet version of road rage, flame mail. My wife has a theory that if you give something like this a name, people think: "Ooh, I'm a bit annoyed, maybe I should try that new road rage/air rage/flame mail thing."

"If you're sending libelous, offensive, racist or defamatory email, you could be in big trouble."

We have to accept that the Internet is no longer the wild west of the technological world So nerds who swagger around the Net – because they can't communicate in real life but feel empowered by the untouchable nature of email – should get on their horse and ride out of town. They can no longer roam the Web wasteland like lone gunslingers, shooting down anyone they meet.

Really if the Web is a community, it shouldn't bar newcomers or make them feel unwanted. That sort of community is made up of grumpy old gits in flat caps who tell you not to sit there or drink out of that tankard

Companies and individuals are now being sued for the content of email sent from their machines. Postings on newsgroups, where the phrase flame mail originated, are also subject to legal scrutiny – the sheriff and the law have arrived in town.

So if you're sending libelous, offensive, racist or defamatory email, you could be in big trouble. Under UK law, an employer can be held responsible for employee's emails if they're written in the course of employment, even though the act was unsanctioned by the boss

Microsoft knows the damage that emails can do - the US State Department seized over a million of its pages in the anti-trust proceedings. Here in the UK, Norwich Union were paid £450,000 in an out of court settlement after some of its employees slagged off the competition in internal emails.

Even service providers aren't above the law. Demon is currently in the midst of the first UK libel action against an ISP. The complaint arises from a defamatory message posted on a newsgroup hosted by Demon. When the plaintiff saw the message he asked Demon to remove it, but no action was taken. The message was copied to servers in the UK and around the world. Demon's defence is that it acted unwittingly and without being aware of the content. But ignorance is usually no defence in a court of law

There are places you can go to let off steam. Don't get into a flame war with the moron who's annoyed you let the law take care of them and get yourself along to one of the newsgroups specifically designed for altercations – alt.flame springs to mind. There are people there who'll be happy to accommodate your anger. But be warned – their abuse verges on the professional.

Richard Dinnick is the site reviews editor of Internet Magazine. He can be contacted at richardd@internet.emap.com

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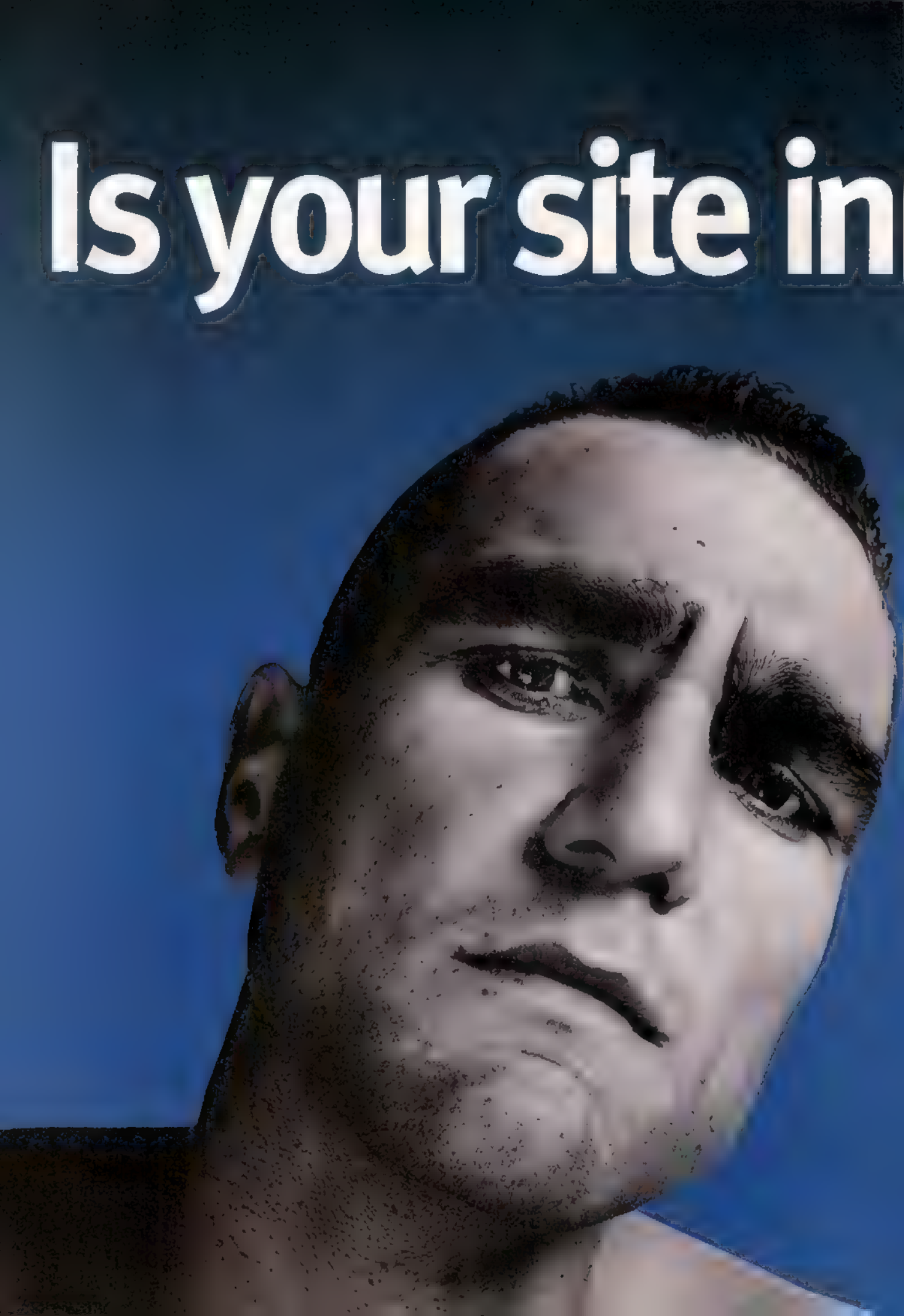
Cisco Powered Network

Is your site in



safe hands?

When you're choosing someone to host your site, information is power.

Before making your choice, you need to know what questions to ask and what the answers really mean.

Over the next few pages, we'll provide all the information you need to choose your site host.

We'll cover the technical aspects of Web hosting, how to work out exactly what you should be paying, and what you should be looking out for.

On page 36, you'll find our exclusive new Web hosting tests, where you can see for yourself how the companies that provide Web hosting perform.

These tests show how quickly your Web pages could be downloaded from these companies and how often we encountered problems with their Web servers.

So read on, and we'll help you find the ideal home for your site

20 questions to ask your Web hosting company...

Many companies will try to tempt you into going with them on the

they sometimes don't tell the whole story – you could end up pay

and even penalty fees if your site gets too busy. There's a simple

other extras) and ask several companies to supply you with a com-
plete quote for the whole thing.

A typical shopping list might look something like this:

- Domain name – www.whatever.co.uk
- Five POP3 email accounts
- 50Mb of disk space
- HTML pages using ASP scripts
- An e-commerce system based on Actinic Catalog requiring CGI scripts
- RealSystems G2 streaming media server (10 clients at any one time)

add an additional £50 to the cost of registering a domain name.

3 How much Web traffic can I have on my site?

AFTER YOU'VE RESTORED YOUR CLASSIC, EXHIBIT IT AROUND THE WORLD

Restoring a classic car may be hard work, but showing it off around the world couldn't be easier. With a **Kodak** DC210 Plus Zoom Digital Camera you can capture great quality pictures and e-mail them anywhere in the world in minutes. You can also publish your pictures on the Internet, set up your own web site, or even print your own eye-catching newsletter.

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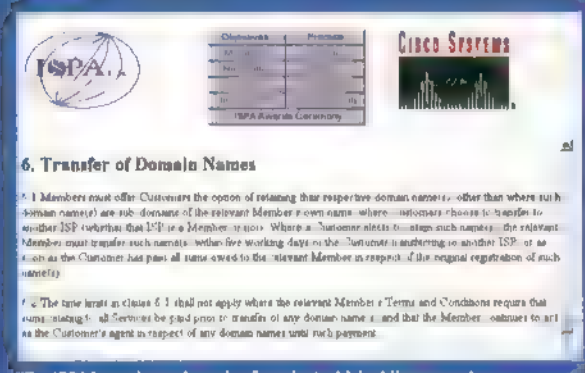
the quality of service, wh

5 What contingency plans are there in the event of problems?

will these affect your site?

Web sites?



The ISPA has released a code of conduct which obliges member companies to allow customers to move their domain names without hassle

www.ispa.org.uk/practise.htm

7 What is the company background?

and what backing it has?

Moving a Web site

contacts for domains are at www.demon.net/external/nicels.html

assist in this process in case of problems.

How to go about it

co-operate, and usually takes no more than a couple of days.

making sure you're listed as one of the contacts in the first place.

the company's choice of software impose on your site.

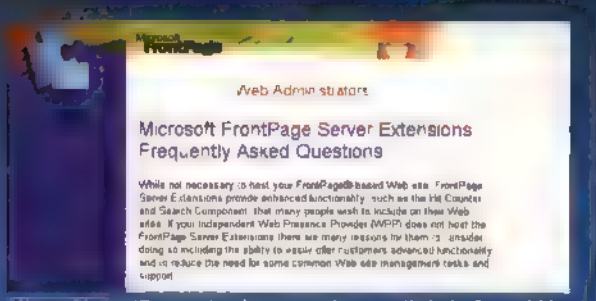
11 Can I run my own CGI scripts?

because a badly written script could crash the Web server.

This could be a problem if you're planning to sell products

product that it has tested.

12 Does it support FrontPage?



Microsoft's FrontPage system lets you update your Web site from within the editing program, but your Web host has to support it

you want to use FrontPage to design your site.

a credit card processor.

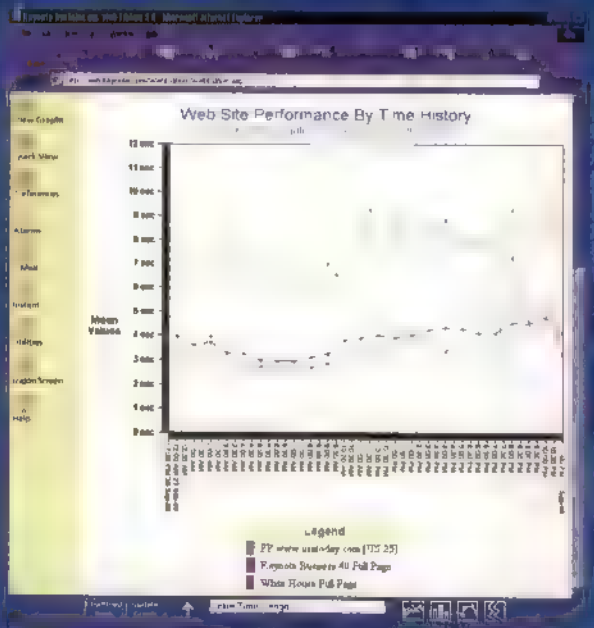
with this. Does it have special connections to the US?

15 Is there email as well as Web hosting?

You'll probably want several separate email addresses for things like sales enquiries, feedback and technical support, so put this on your shopping list. You should also check exactly how you access these email accounts – will they just forward onto your existing email or are they full accounts in their own right? And don't forget to check that you can send as well as receive email from these accounts – you could end up looking a bit crap if replies to customer enquires come from your Freeserve account.

16 How big are the connections to the Internet?

The connections between the hosting company and the Internet are vital – they provide the route for everybody who wants to look at your site. So it's important to make sure you know



and produces a report to show how quickly pages can be accessed

look at exactly how well the Web hosting companies are performing.

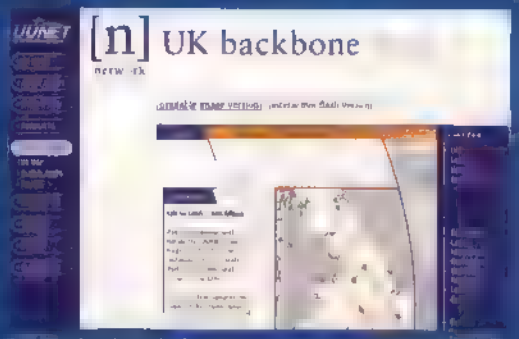
Many Web hosting companies have more than one connection to the Internet (technical term is multi-homing), so that if one link fails, people can still access your site over

17 How many Web sites will I be sharing a computer with?

company deals with sites that get extremely busy.

18 [illegible] computer?

If you think your site's likely to get extremely busy or might need a lot of computing power (which is quite possible if you include databases or streaming video) then it might be worth looking at getting your own server. Many companies will offer you a service where you have one dedicated machine that's yours



UUNet gives lots of information about how its network is built on its Web site at [illegible] – you should be suspicious of any hosting company that won't tell you how its network is built

occur when you share a computer with other sites.

19 [illegible]

your Web site, but you need to process this file to get information from it (see page 121 for our Web Professional on how this process works and how you can do it yourself). Some hosting companies will automatically process the log-file and send you a report on who has accessed your site.

This could provide you with a good indication of how many people have looked at your site and thus how much money you might expect to make from adverts.

20 Is the service tested by any third parties or systems?

Ask the hosting company which services it uses – for instance, Keynote (at www.keynote.com) does a comprehensive set of tests of the speed of Web sites, while RadView produces software that can be used to test how Web servers perform when they get lots of hits. Inverse Networks has also recently released software designed to allow ISPs and hosting companies to check the performance of their own systems – more details of this system (called IP InSight) are available at www.inverse.net/products

more details.

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Web provider labs tests

As part of our in-depth look at Web hosting, we have carried out a series of exclusive tests on Web hosting companies in the UK. Pick a top performer and then subject them to the 20 questions

Our exclusive Web provider labs tests provide you with information to help you choose a Web hosting company. They give you information on how fast our test systems can download Web pages from a hosting compa

and the availability of the Web site, both vital factors when choos

are that the various providers achieve during the tests.

The first winner

This shows is that our test machine was able to download Web

download speed.

Other noteworthy performances include GX Networks in third

historical results on its Web site at www.webperf.net.

achieve a connection to the Web server) and time outs (where the testing system was able to contact the Web server, but didn't start

ested – of 99.17 per cent – was fine.

How the tests work

on availability are so small as to be irrelevant.

on the testing Web site.

The transfer rate is the speed at which data can be transferred

machine – the test machine on Demon's network does not test

few months to see how fast Web sites would be for US users.

www.webperf.net.

About the company behind the Web host tests

The Internet Magazine Web host tests are carried out by Zeus

high-performance, easy to use, feature rich Web server software.

Soon even today's largest machines will be unable to cope with the increasing load placed upon them. Zeus Technology was

Instead of transistors to the problem

world record for Web server performance.

This month's best-performing hosting companies, as tested by Zeus Technologies

	Paradise Internet Network Services	www.pins.co.uk	[illegible]	[illegible]
2	WebWorlds	www.webworlds.co.uk	354.15	98.92%
3	GX Networks	www.gxn[illegible]et	348.93	99.68%
4	easyie	www.easynet.co.uk	345.91	99.86%
5	Netcom UK	www.netcom[illegible].co.uk	304.95	99.97%
6	UNET	www.[illegible]net	260.23	99.[illegible]%
7	Virtual Internet	www.v[illegible]t	234.41	99.43%
8	Demon Internet	www.demon.ne	23[illegible]19	99.9[illegible]
9	Nildram	www.[illegible]net	217.60	100.00%
10	NetBenefit	www.netbenefit.co.uk	201.85	99.88[illegible]
11	Kwebl Internet	www.kwe[illegible]	2[illegible]2	99.[illegible]%
12	Technocom PLC	www.te[illegible]	60.37	99.46[illegible]
13	Internet Network Services	www.[illegible]	2[illegible]69	99.74%
14	LoNET UK	www.[illegible]	41.56	99.9[illegible]%
15	VBC net	www.[illegible]net	32.62	97.66%
16	Net Direct	www.[illegible]	[illegible]4	99.70%
17	Netcetera	www.[illegible]	18.71	99.[illegible]%
18	NewNet	www.newnet.co.uk/home	18.15	99.94%
19	Cocoon Internet Services	www.cocoon.co.uk	14.53	99.94%
20	Pavilion Internet	www.pavilion.co.uk	[illegible]74	99.85%
21	Magic Moments	www.[illegible]s.com	[illegible]46	98.[illegible]%
22	Netcentre Solutions Ltd	www.[illegible].co.uk	08.46	99.67%
23	Direct [illegible]	www.[illegible]net	[illegible]67	99.94%
24	Total Web Solutions	www.[illegible]web.[illegible]	08.55	99.88%
25	Cethernet Ltd	www.[illegible]net	08.[illegible]	99.[illegible]%
26	Logic[illegible]	www.[illegible].co.uk	06.[illegible]	94.40[illegible]
27	Prestel Online	www.prestel.co.uk	04.06	98.[illegible]%
28	London Web	www.londonweb.co.uk	04.[illegible]	99.[illegible]
29	Scotland Online	www.scotland.net	[illegible]7	98.80%
30	Nway	www.nway.co.uk	01.[illegible]	99.[illegible]%
31	Worldwide Web Services	www.webs.co.uk	00.[illegible]	99.[illegible]%
	BT WebWorks	www.[illegible].co.uk	00.77	99.58%
33	Netkonect	www.netkonect.co.uk	[illegible]9	99.[illegible]%
34	Research Machines	www.[illegible].uk	97.75	99.[illegible]%
35	[illegible]	www.[illegible].uk	94.06	99.[illegible]%
36	[illegible] Internet Services	www.charis.net	[illegible]82	99.85%
37	Ltd	www.[illegible]	[illegible]7	99.94%
38	Frontier Internet Services	www.flech.co.uk	90.63	99.49%
39	edNet	www.[illegible].uk	90.41	99.58%
40	Onyx Internet	www.onyxnet.co.uk	90.48	99.54%
41	[illegible]net	www.[illegible]	90.25	99.43%
42	PS Net UK Ltd	www.[illegible]net	90.00	99.76%
43	REDNET	www.[illegible]	[illegible]78	99.82%
44	ENTANET	www.enta[illegible]	89.70	98.80%
45	Compex	www.compex.com	89.68	99.34
46	Tecnet Ltd	www.[illegible].uk	89.29	99.13%
47	Internet Central	www.[illegible].co.uk	88.[illegible]	99.[illegible]%
48	ClaraNet Ltd	www.clara.net	88.[illegible]	99.82%
49	Mydatech	www.[illegible].co.uk	87.86	99.[illegible]%
50	Soft Options UK	www.[illegible].co.uk	87.63	98.47%
51	Oxford Community Internet	www.[illegible].uk	86.96	99.[illegible]%
52	Way Ltd	www.[illegible]	86.[illegible]	99.49%
53	The Web Factory	www.[illegible].co.uk	86.22	99.[illegible]%
54	EDS Technology Ltd	www.[illegible].uk	84.74	98.[illegible]%
55	Sonnet Internet Ltd	www.sonnet.co.uk	83.24	99.32%
56	Atlas Internet	www.[illegible].net	82.80	99.[illegible]%
57	UKP	www.[illegible]	[illegible]38	97.[illegible]%
58	Legend Internet	www.legend.co.uk	82.04	99.[illegible]%
59	ACE Internet	www.ace.co.uk	81.83	99.45%
60	Quza	www.quza.com	81.82	99.20%
61	Tesnet	www.[illegible].co.uk	81.58	99.[illegible]%
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63	Rapidsite	www.[illegible].co.uk	81.26	99.46%
64	Multimedia Machine Ltd	www.[illegible]	81.21	99.[illegible]%
65	Abel Internet	www.abel.net.uk	81.94	99.[illegible]%
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67	Cybase Ltd	www.cybase.co.uk	81.49	100.00%
68	WinNet	www.[illegible]	81.62	98.89[illegible]
69	Thames Global Internet Services	www.tgis.co.uk	81.90	99.[illegible]%
70	Data Link Internet	www.data-link.net	81.88	99.49%
71	Andover Online	www.andover.co.uk	81.77	99.94%
72	Adept	www.adept.co.uk	81.91	99.76%
	Timewarp	www.[illegible].co.uk	81.47	99.28%

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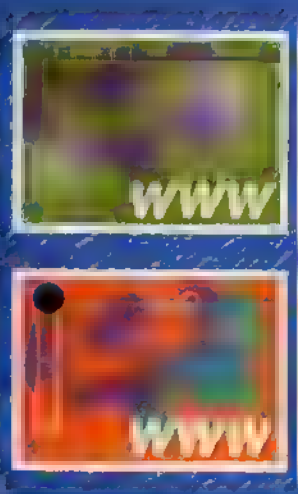

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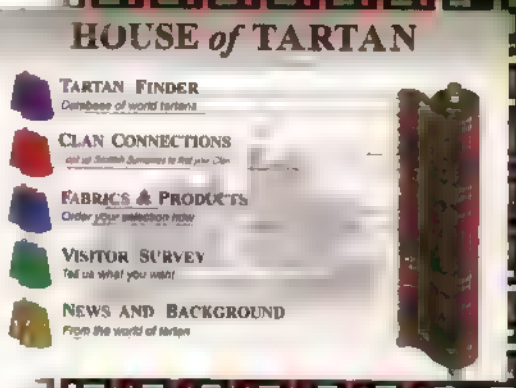
OUR FRIENDS IN THE NORTH

Expats and nationals alike, the Scots are a proud race. And they're more than willing to let you know it online. Robert Alstead takes the high road for a whistlestop tour of Scotland just in time for devolution

In 1745, when the Butcher of Cumberland routed Bonnie Prince Charlie and his demoralised troops on the bloody battlefield of Culloden, he was blissfully unaware that he was sowing the seeds for one of the most conspicuous Web communities in the world. The subsequent oppression of everything clannish (wearing of tartan, speaking of Gaelic and playing of bagpipes) and the ensuing highland clearances – where Scottish lairds replaced towns of people with more lucrative farms of sheep – meant thousands of Scots emigrated to the four corners of the earth.

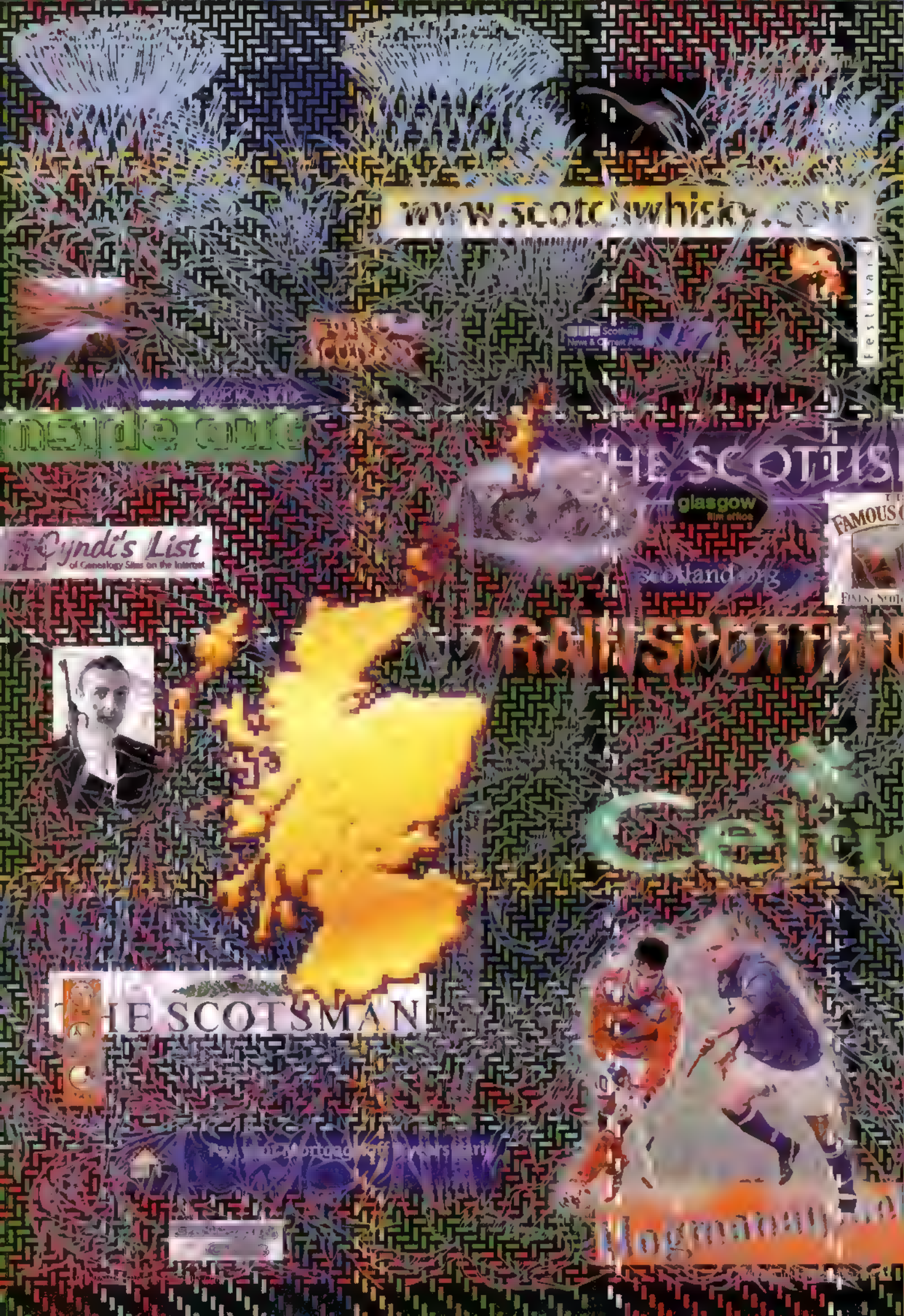
Estimates say the current population of Scottish expats is 10 times the actual population of the auld country. Many use the Net and are curious, often intensely so, about their Scottish heritage. Descendants of those early highland refugees rally together at Web sites like Gathering of the Clans (at **www.tartans.com**) and The Clans and Tartans of Scotland (at **www.scotclans.com**). Fired up by *Braveheart*, they publish tartan-draped, bagpipe-playing Web pages with a vengeance.

This is great news for nationalists, but not so great for browsers. There's nothing like a slab of plaid spread across your desktop, while the 16-bit MIDI version of Amazing Grace squeals out of your speakers to make you reach for your Back button.



The House of Tartan (**www.house-of-tartan.scotland.net**) lets you search for and download your tartan, and could be the root of this ubiquitous design crime. It claims to have up to 18,000 different clans in its tartan database.

There's no denying the usefulness of the Web for researching your roots, Scottish or otherwise. Just take a look at Cyndi's List (**www.cyndislist.com**) to see what a vast network of resources can be found, as well as the numerous commercial genealogy services on offer.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Armed with your credit card number, you can now perform direct searches of all the records housed in Edinburgh at the General Register Office for Scotland **www.origins.net**. This has records of births, deaths, marriage records and censuses dating back 100 years, as well as some ancient documents from as far back as 1553.

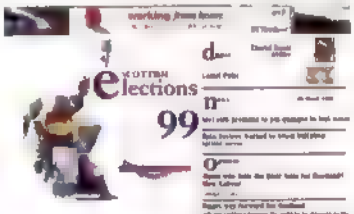
Scotland's past gets more romantic when you start trawling through its many whisky sites. The imagery aims to intoxicate with its familiar gift-wrap of nostalgia and soft focus highland scenery – though the word overdesigned frequently springs to mind. The best thing about the whisky sites is they're always running competitions to win a bottle or two of their best. Try Scotch Whisky (at **www.scotchwhisky.com**), an online whisky club that covers many of the bases, with profiles of single malts and blends, and links to many of the official brand sites.

Where food is concerned, deep-fried Mars bars might catch the headlines, but haggis is still Scotland's national dish and there are many recipes – see Lloyds World of Haggis (at **www.staff.uiuc.edu/~nhbaker/haggis**). You can even shoot your own 'great chieftain o' the puddin' race', as Rabbie Burns dubbed it, at Cyber Edinburgh's Shockwave gallery (**www.cybersurf.co.uk/home/shockwave**).

Scots culture on the Web frequently spills into kitsch, but not always. One of the main events on the Scottish cultural landscape was the opening of the Royal Museum of Scotland in November 1998. It's a fantastic building, blending traditional and modern architecture, good taste and experimentation. See it for yourself at the museum's elegant Web site (**www.museums.scotland.net**) and catch up on some... er... real Scottish history.

The government agency Historic Scotland (at **www.historic-scotland.gov.uk**), is also worth a look. It has a powerful search facility that lets you find the nearest historical sights to any given location. If you're buying a house in Scotland, you can also check to see if it's a listed building.

That's history dealt with. What about the current political process taking place in Scotland? The election on 6 May will usher in the first Scottish parliament in 300 years. But polls have shown that many Scots are still unsure of the changes that devolution will bring.

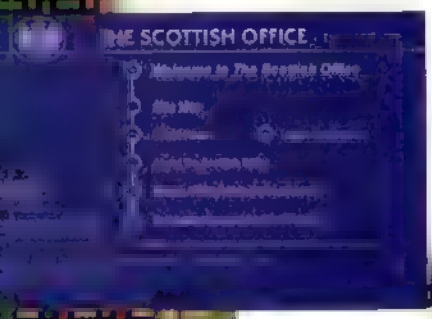


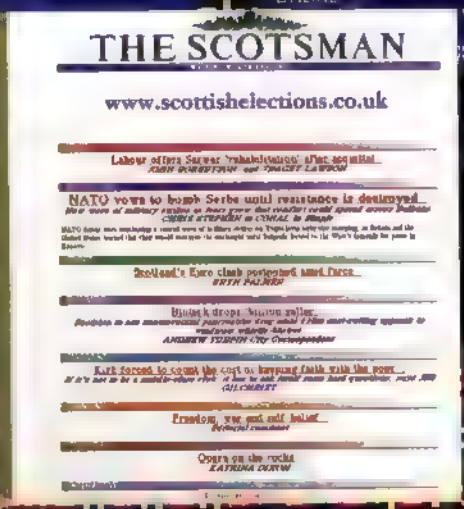
The Web is playing some part in the democratic process. When the Stationery Office ran out of printed copies of the devolution White Paper (in the run-up to the devolution referendum), thousands of people downloaded it from the Scottish Office's Web site (at **www.scotland.gov.uk**).

And Scots abroad will be able to watch the election live on the Web. *The Scotsman* newspaper (**www.scotsman.com**), based in Edinburgh, is promising real-time coverage of election night with, in true swingometer style, a constantly updating map of the new political face of Scotland (at **www.scottishelections.co.uk**).

The Scotsman was one of the first UK newspapers online. It hasn't changed much over the years, but it's still a good source of information, with an interactive crossword and a live Web cam on its office building in the city centre.

The Herald (**www.theherald.co.uk**), the voice of the west, is also good for news and comment, with an accent on Glesca (Glasgow), while for a quicker read, *The Daily Record* is at **www.record-mail.co.uk**. The latest contender in the busy Scottish newspaper market, is *The Sunday Herald* (at **www.sundayherald.com**), launched earlier this year, which has a fondness for online debates and real-time voting on topical issues.

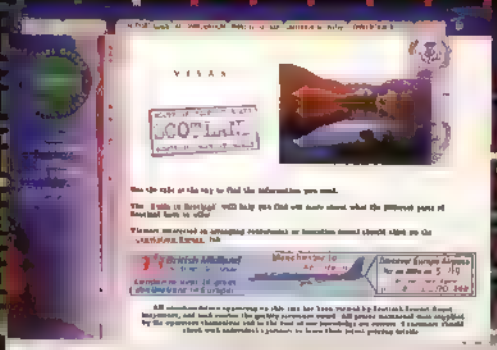




Not to be forgotten is BBC Scotland, which now produces daily Webcasts of Scottish news bulletins (at **www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/news/audiovideo.shtml**). The audio video vaults of the main BBC site are also full of Scots brogue, from cabinet ministers to television presenters. I searched for Kirsty Wark and found her in the BBC's Newsnight section (at **www.news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/events/newsnight/newsid_248000/248099.stm**) And who else was there, but a bearded Ewan McGregor talking about the embarrassment of returning to his home town of Crieff after his third biography had been published.

Which brings me neatly to Scotland's recent cinematic successes. Glasgow is the focus of the Scottish broadcast and film industry, and the Glasgow Film Office (**www.glasgowfilm.org.uk**) is the place to go for Real Video clips from the stable of recent Scottish films, including *Shallow Grave*, *Trainspotting* and *Orphans*. It also carries filmographies and news on the latest productions.

The biggest name in Scottish film is still Sean Connery. At one point, he was Scotland's film industry. The Big Yin straddles the internet like a colossus. One of the most informative places for ➤



Connery memorabilia, complete with an archive of news articles, is Kimberly Last's Sean Connery site (www.mcs.net/~klast/www/connery.html). It's the place to go if you want to get up to speed on Connery's plans to develop a Scottish film studio in Edinburgh.

While Glasgow has the film industry, Edinburgh is the festival city. The Guinness Book of Records lists the Edinburgh Festival in August as the biggest arts festival in the world. There are several different festivals running concurrently, as you'll find at the official site for all the Edinburgh Festivals (www.edinburghfestivals.com). The other inescapable event is the Millennium Hogmanay celebration. Events are yet to be announced for the mother of all New Year parties, but check Hogmanay.net (www.hogmanay.net) in early May for Scotland-wide celebration details.

Scotland has its fair share of mysteries and unexplained phenomena: ghosts, UFOs, and that most durable of creatures, the Loch Ness Monster. Legend of Nessie (www.nessie.co.uk) is a good site for the latter, with an index of sightings, pics, and geological surveys of the loch.

Threatening to overtake Nessie for weirdness is Scotland's UFOlogy. The Bonnybridge Triangle in central Scotland has been the scene of a surprising number of sightings of strange cigar-shaped objects, zigzagging bright lights, and things that glow orange in the dark. This is the subject of UFO Scotland (http://wkweb5.cableinet.co.uk/dledger), a homespun site from the 'everything but the kitchen sink' school of design which carries articles from the national press. Particularly amusing is the story of a forestry worker who was attacked by two bouncing spiky balls that rendered him unconscious and left his trousers in tatters.

If that doesn't put you off visiting Scotland, a good starting point for planning any trip is the Scottish Tourist Board site (at www.holiday.scotland.net). This is on the tartan side, but tourist attractions and accommodation are well catered for and the links section is good for transport information.

Destination Scotland (www.destination-scotland.com) is an umbrella site for other smaller accommodation sites and will save you trawling through 101 bed and breakfast sites. Travel Scotland (www.travelscotland.co.uk) has some nice features, like a travelometer and a calendar of events, but doesn't appear to be active. Scotland HolidayNet (www.aboutscotland.com) lacks some of the whizzy features, but it's worth taking a look at the slide shows and photo features, which cover things like the highlands and traditional home baking.

There are numerous other online travel guides to Scotland, though they're all quite similar and bland – there are only so many glowing articles you can read about whisky and castles. For quick tips and recommendations, Scotland the Best (www.grouse.com/etb) is refreshingly concise. It provides pithy paragraphs on where to stay, eat, drink and visit in Edinburgh, Glasgow and the rest of Scotland. The main drawback is that it doesn't provide links to external sites.

If none of the above satisfy your needs, there are a number of Scottish Web directories to turn to. Scotland.org (www.scotland.org) is a Scottish Enterprise-funded Web directory in the Yahoo! mould, and all its sites are related to Scotland. Yahoo! itself has an extensive Scottish section (at www.yahoo.co.uk/Regional/Countries/United_Kingdom/Scotland).

Rampant Scotland also deserves a mention. The directory is in desperate need of an overhaul, but the weekly email newsletter, Scottish Snippets, is an entertaining digest of the week's news, with topical anecdotes, Scots humour, dialect, and other stories sure to tickle homesick expats.

No round-up of Scotland would be complete without a mention of Ftba'. One team site that stands out is Celtic (at www.celticfc.co.uk). It's informative, dynamic and a great advert for the club. There's a 360° tour around the stadium, club news and classic moments from Celtic's history. You can buy merchandise, check the team's results and fixtures, and there are links to all the major Scottish teams, except rivals Rangers. You can even register to receive official Celtic FC press releases. The other half of the Old Firm (at www.rangers.co.uk) spent a long time developing its site, but it's been worth the wait, with a Flash movie on the intro page showing parts of the ground and a virtual tour which takes you around the stadium. It's a well presented, easy to navigate site, with sections for news, scoreboards, match reports, a half-time games section, and even a jukebox of Rangers-related songs.

Scottish Football (www.scottishfootball.com) is another excellent site for non-partisan match reports and heaps of stats, while followers of the oval-balled game should pay a visit to the Scottish Rugby Union site (at www.sru.org.uk). The other popular sport in the highlands is shinty. The most definitive site is Shinty.com (http://shinty.com), but other shinty sites are all good resources in their own right, and the tartan quotient is thankfully low.

heat
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A LONG TIME AGO IN A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY... OK, SO IT WAS EARTH JUST A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO.... PEOPLE STARTED TO REALISE THEY COULD MAKE MONEY FROM THEIR UNOFFICIAL WEB SITES. STEVE SHIPSIDE VISITS THE SUCCESS STORIES AND SHARES THEIR SECRETS. YOU COULD DO IT TOO – THAT'S OFFICIAL!

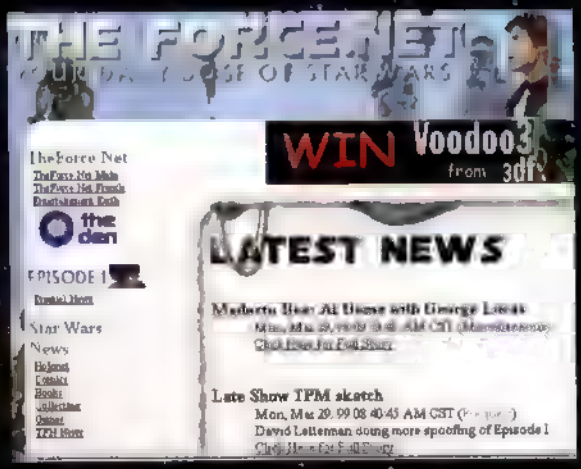
Spot the difference: pictured at the top of the page is the official site for the Star Wars prequel. The two lower down the page are from an unofficial site. Can't spot the difference? The unofficial site even had the second movie trailer before the official one.

The Net is alive with tales of poachers turned gamekeepers. In the past, it's been the hacker who cracks the computer systems of major businesses and ends up working work in the company's security department. The idea of a thin line between the legitimate and the unlawful is a familiar and popular tale, and the Net embraces the official and the subversive with complete equality. You could be forgiven for thinking these stories are urban myths born out of wish fulfilment. But we've peeked under the cover of the myth, and found some of it to be completely true. Well sort of. Never mind hacking your way to a lucrative post at NASA – if you really want to make the transition from the badlands of outlawdom to the cosy sofa of legitimacy, it's time to start designing your own unofficial Web site. Think of a subject you're interested in (or obsessed with) and design a site around it. The hope is that you'll be approached by a well-known company or organisation that wants to turn it into an official site. So, do you fancy getting paid lots of money to design a site about something you're passionate about? It's already worked for plenty of other people.

As a treat for our fans, the new *Star Wars* Episode I trailer is available through www.starwars.com.

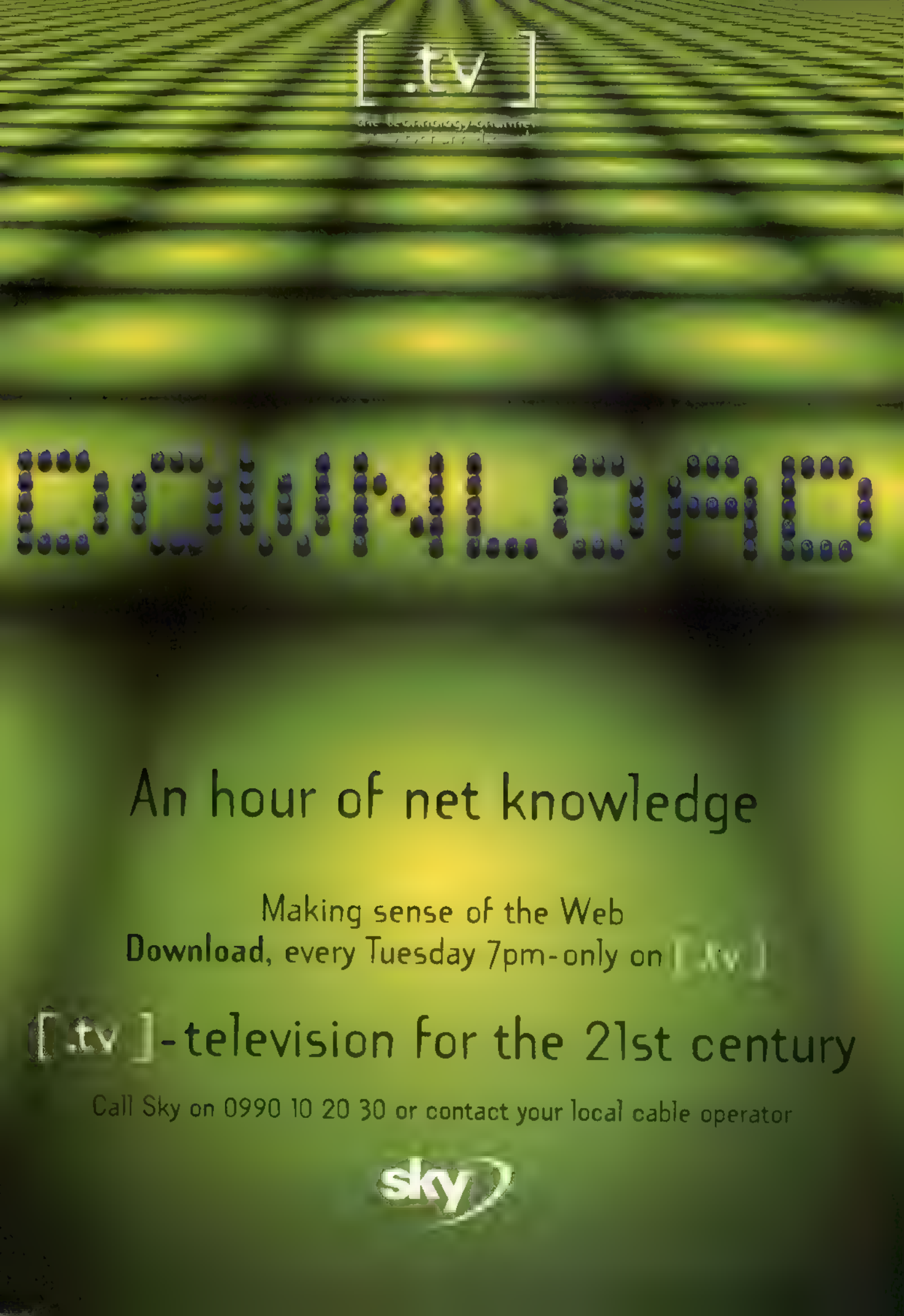
STAR WARS

You can't have failed to notice the hype about the forthcoming *Star Wars* prequel or the QuickTime trailers doing the rounds on the Net. But where do you think the trailer for the new film was first posted? The obvious answer would be LucasFilm's own site; or at www.phantommenace.com, right? Wrong. It first appeared on a site called www.theforce.net. If you came across The Force by mistake, you'd be forgiven for thinking it was an official site. It certainly has the looks. "A lot of people say it looks so sharp it's got to be associated," says pastor Joshua Griffin, "but we're completely unofficial and not affiliated in any way." The site first emerged three years ago from Texas University, and now has a team of 12, including Griffin, which works across the US (and Canada) to keep it updated. There are hordes of contributors. "We have spies all over the world who send in little titbits." They must be industry insiders – how do they get The Force past the studio to releases on the preview?



"We say we have informants at all levels, but we're an unofficial site, so we don't want to get anyone into trouble, and we haven't had many problems with LucasFilm." This is astonishing when you consider how LucasFilm is protecting its merchandising rights for the new film, forcing manufacturers have been tangled with heavy-duty non-disclosure agreements, so how has The Force escaped the wrath of Lucas? "We have an internal code you've got to sign up to the site – we wouldn't post the film's script, for example, or anything that would damage people's enjoyment. And we don't want to jeopardise our status – in particular, we don't want a cease and desist order which has happened to other sites."

To avoid this, the team maintain email contact with LucasFilm and take care to respond to feedback. The Force also tells its viewers when the official site has been updated. This could be the reason for the longevity of the site. Griffin has his own theory: "We aim to provide the fans with the best *Star Wars* site they can get, and I think that's what we do."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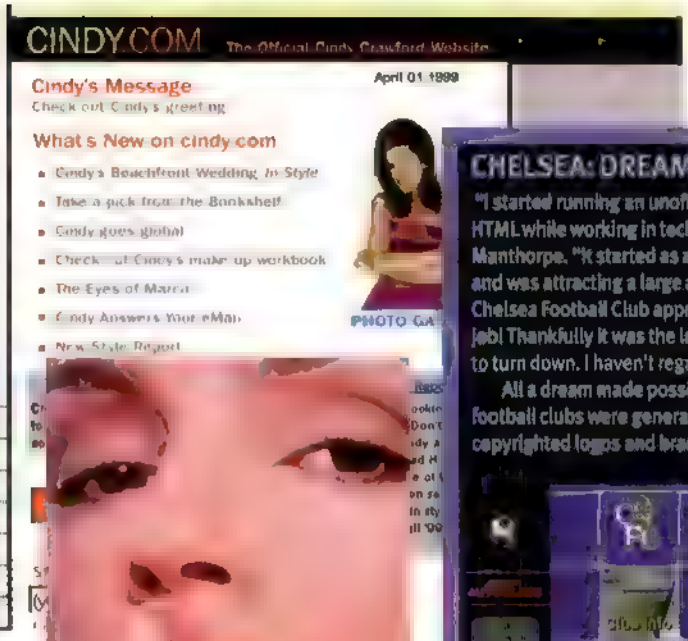
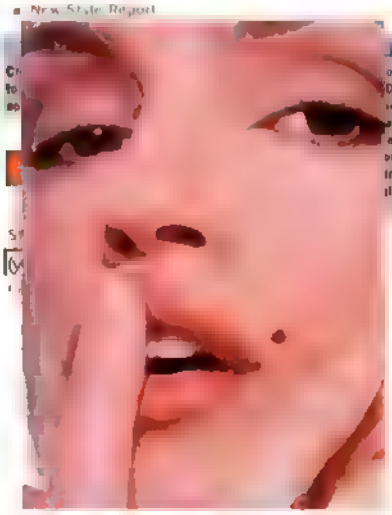




Cindy Crawford responded to unofficial tribute sites (some in dubious taste) by launching her own

CINDY

"I've seen a lot of the unofficial sites out there. Some of them are nice and some are, well, let's just say they're a bit different," says Cindy Crawford, who's just launched her own official site (at www.cindy.com). Crawford is one of the top five celebrity names entered into search engines on the Web.

"I guess I just wanted my fans to have a place to go for the real information about me," says Crawford. She claims to have been directly involved in creating the site, though it was designed by New York-based Entertainment Drive (www.edrive.com) specialists in official celebrity Web sites. So did this involve choosing the background colours or supplying personal photos from her own albums? There's lots of content here, including 'personal' jottings (in English and Japanese), photos, video, audio and a wide array of merchandise and signed photographs. It's worth contrasting its excellent, professional design with some of the frankly unpleasant unofficial sites out there, such as Fonny's Cindy Crawford page at www.webstorage.com/~fonny/Supermodel/Cindy_Crawford. What you won't find on the official site, which really sets it apart from the unofficial sites, is any smut or impertinent remarks about her former hubby and antics involving small rodents.

BEWARE THE BIG BOYS

Fan sites for BBC humour programmes got a shock two years ago when Auntie Beeb decided to move onto the Web and bare its teeth by ordering all fan sites to cease and desist. Unofficial music sites face the same problem, and have to tread edgily around copyright issues for fear of litigation. The jealous grip that management companies keep on their proteges can also lead to trouble, as Oasis fan sites discovered two years ago. The group's management, Ignition, took fan sites to task and threatened to sue anyone that posted the band's music or lyrics on their sites.

CHELSEA: DREAMS CAN COME TRUE

"I started running an unofficial Chelsea site four years ago as a way of teaching myself HTML while working in tech support for ISP Direct Connection," explains Jack Manthorpe. "It started as a hobby in my spare time, but it became a rather huge site and was attracting a large amount of traffic. Two years later, and totally out of the blue, Chelsea Football Club approached me. I wasn't sure if it wanted to sue me or offer me a job! Thankfully it was the latter, and as a massive Chelsea FC fan, it was just too good to turn down. I haven't regretted a day since."

All a dream made possible by the fact that this was a couple of years ago, when football clubs were generally not very Web savvy. While the unofficial sites were using copyrighted logos and branding, they were also showing their official peers the way to

go. "At that time there were only three or four official football sites," says Manthorpe. "I wasn't really expecting rivalry from an official site, I was just worried that I'd used the club logo, which could have been seen as a breach of copyright." But it turned out that Chelsea FC was hanging around on the sidelines scouting for talent. "Chelsea wanted an official site and opened tenders to a number of design houses before looking at the unofficial sites. The club then approached me to run it for them with IBM doing the basic design."

Manthorpe's outlaw days are behind him, but he's still positive in his attitude to today's unofficial sites. "Perhaps it's because of my own roots. I encourage the unofficial sites and have links to them from my own. After all, there's no competition. Chelsea fans are still going to come to our site, so I'm perfectly happy." Manthorpe is similarly relaxed about using the club logo: "Some things can cause problems. A lot of the pictures on the site are owned by a photograph agency, not Chelsea Football Club. If unofficial sites use them, they might get a call from the agency, but not from us."

There are similar tales of official sites turning to their unofficial rivals to select staff, including Leeds FC and Liverpool FC. It's a fairy tale for Manthorpe, a lifelong Chelsea FC fan, who's still striking a balance between the need to maintain a fanzine feel, while reflecting the authority you'd expect from an official site. "I've been here just over two years now, working from the ground and maintaining and developing the site on a daily basis on my own. I did wonder if the novelty would wear off after a while, but having the resources and access to the players is a big help. I think it's still got a fanzine feel and it tries to avoid being too corporate, as many sites can be. Yet it's official and has benefits in terms of all the backing, stories and full-time effort that I couldn't have done before."

Fanzines have always been part of football, and fans are keen to learn more about their heroes. Everybody in football has an opinion, and since the Web offers the opportunity to publish fanzines and cultivate feedback, it's inevitable that the finest traditions of the amateur should come to the fore. Andy Lyons, from the 'half decent football magazine' *When Saturday Comes*, says the unofficial site is a natural development of the football fanzine. "If you go to a search site and look up the clubs, there'll be half a dozen unofficial sites for every official one. Internet sites might not replace printed fanzines, but the principle of low-cost creation has moved onto the Net – it's accessible and can be updated easily, which gives it an advantage." It's no surprise, then, that Footie Search (http://tw-net.winsocket.com/fsearch) has over 700 football sites, the vast majority of which are unofficial.

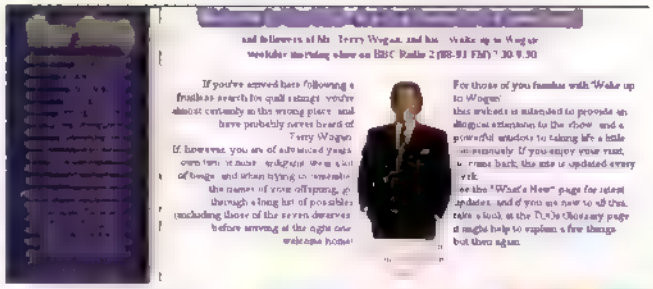
TERRY WOGAN

You'd think public entertainment organisations would welcome unofficial sites as being for, and by, the fans, but a fair amount of jealousy is usually involved. The problem is the perceived gap between the legal owners of intellectual property and the audience who believe they understand it or own it (because it's their site). That gap is never wider than when these fans believe they understand their fixation better than the men in suits – it's here that the mutual Web traffic often grinds to a halt. "I provide a link to the official site," says Kevin Joslin, the man behind www.togs.org – the unofficial Terry Wogan site. "The official site doesn't have a link to mine, not a hope. But I don't need a link from them because my unofficial site gets plenty of visitors anyway."

Joslin is not so much a poacher turned gamekeeper as the other way round, having previously contributed to the radio programme he now celebrates online. "I started contributing to the programme about two years ago. The show relies on contributions by people with a warped sense of humour – it sounds strange, but attracting five million listeners has to be some mark of success. I took a long hard look at the official BBC Web site and found it was a bit corporate, run by marketing types, and divorced from any real feeling for the programme. I felt I had a much better feel for it than the men in Armani at the BBC." Joslin decided to do it for himself, but not before speaking to the producer of the show. "He was very supportive and agreed that the Web site lacked something since entries had to go through official channels, so he gave me material to set up togs.org. Terry has plugged the site to death on air recently – he likes it much more now."

The BBC has never called up to complain, and Joslin doesn't want to give it any cause to: "I try to avoid any trouble by saying it's not an endorsed site, it's just for the fans. We keep the content under careful control, and there are no dodgy entries or nasty comments, so the BBC hasn't got a lot of room for complaint."

Auntie Beeb hasn't offered Joslin a job yet, and it's not likely to, but the fact that there's been no complaint bears tribute to his caution, despite Wogan's galling endorsements. Good ground rules, then, would appear to mean you can play safe while not having to maintain invisible. If you want to co-exist with the big boys, you have to respect copyright, avoid the temptation to slag off the official sites, and be truly appreciative of your subject. Get it right, and you'll improve the chances that your next phone call could be from a future employer and not a peeved lawyer.



Above: The TOG provides an Armani-free home for the bewildered Terry Wogan fan...

Right: And here's the leader of the Togs, as the BBC suits prefer to see him

Wake Up To Wogan
Mon - Fri 7.30am - 9.30am

Ease into the day with the award-winning Wake Up To Wogan, featuring Terry's unique breakfast mix of gentle banter and witty observation. Every weekday Terry and the Team cover the things in life that matter from Soaps to Sport to the totally absurd. Add to the listeners' (TOGs - Terry's Old Geezers - or Gals) letters, great music, news and travel, and you've got a mix that'll make your morning

The first football site on the Web

What makes the Web world of football so different is that the fans were the true innovators of online presence. East Anglia might have a reputation as a place where people still point at aeroplanes, but it claims a global first in the form of 'The first football Web site in the world'. The Guinness Book of Records is unhelpful when it comes to verification, but there seems no reason to doubt this claim. An unofficial site, it owes its existence to the technical savvy of a fan called Phil Clarke, who, when not sadly afflicted by his Ipswich FC obsession, manages to hold down a job at BT Research and Development. The site is so old that it was originally only available to BT Internet users. It started out in SGML (Standard Generalised Markup Language) as it preceded the original specification for HTML, but it was rewritten and became a recognisable Web site in 1992 – check it out at www.itfc.co.uk. At this point it passed into the hands of Paul Felton at the University of East Anglia, and he too felt the urge to get a bit fancy, creating a VRML site. He claimed this was the first VRML footie site in the world, maintaining Ipswich's claim to world leadership on the Web. Confronted with that kind of effort, what could any sensible football club do but approach the designers about becoming an official site? im

Ipswich FC led the way in 1999 with an unofficial site that became the club's legitimate home on the Web

5 TOP TIPS FOR YOUR UNOFFICIAL SITE

1 Make it look professional

People aren't going to come back to your site if it looks nasty, so spend some time making sure it looks professional and something that'll impress. It's also well worth spending time creating a proper structure so it's easy to navigate. Keep up with developments in Web design and technology.

2 Respect copyright

As many unofficial sites have found to their cost, posting copyrighted photos, lyrics or samples is self-destructive. At the very least, you'll probably get a nasty 'cease and desist' letter from the lawyers, and you could end up in court. You should be aware of how the law works – see www.cla.co.uk/www/internet.htm for a good guide to copyright and the Internet.

3 Update frequently

People will come back to a Web site if it changes regularly and includes the latest news. Update your site as often as you can, and keep up with the latest news affecting your subject. You might want to consider creating a mailing list so people can receive the latest news by email from your site. But make sure it's easy for people to opt in or out of – it won't help if people think you're a spammer.

4 Co-operate with the official site

Most official sites tolerate unofficial ones that don't actively annoy them. Add a link to the official site and make sure yours is clearly marked as unofficial and unendorsed by the object of your affections. You might even want to have a special section that tells people when new content appears on the official site – make friends, not enemies.

5 Work with other sites

Regarding other unofficial sites as enemies is short-sighted for the Net and won't help to attract people to your site. Co-operate with them instead, and look at other ways you can get them to link to your site. You might also want to look at joining or forming a Webring - see www.webring.org or the Webrings feature in our April issue.

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You've got mail

It's the ultimate in safe sex and a guaranteed turn on – a sexy email at work. Email is rekindling the love letter as well as honing the fine art of flirtation. Liz Walker examines the romantic role of email in the office

What did we do before email at work? It's faster than the telephone and safer than the post, but best of all it's direct and forthright when it comes to flirting with your colleagues. Ever since Bridget Jones received that first teasing email from her boss (regarding the length of her skirt in Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones' Diary*), there's been an explosion in inter-office email affairs. Don't believe me? Ask any honest young singleton at your place of work.

Why use email? Well, it's far less public than gazing into each others' eyes at the office photocopier or copping a drunken snog at the office Christmas party. It also gives you more cool – you can carefully choose what you say and how to word it, give it a quick spellcheck, then tantalise your recipient by making them wait until after lunch for a reply. And you can easily adopt a different persona from the usual, brisk, professional one you wear in the office or indeed the real you – perhaps playing the siren sex goddess or naughty schoolboy, describing the crimson nature of your underwear without fear of your face turning the same shade. You can get down and get dirty on email without giving anything away to those around you, especially titillating in an open plan office.

READING BETWEEN THE LINES WHAT SHE SAYS >Simon I'm disgusted – actually I'm not wearing any today. WHAT SHE MEANS >I only he knew – they're my oldest grey ones with snapped elastic. WHAT SHE SAYS >Not of course I won't tell anyone, I'll be a little secret. WHAT SHE MEANS >I'll forward this to all my mates around the [illegible]. What a scream! I could even send a few BCCs to all my mates at home. <WHAT SHE SAYS >Yes, of course I've deleted them. <WHAT SHE MEANS > printed them out first, for future blackmail potential. WHAT SHE SAYS >I [illegible] >

To make life really easy for the online flirt, there's even a whole cryptic shorthand, as demonstrated in the glossaries of Nan McCarthy's gripping paperback trilogy (*Chat, Crash* and *Connect*), which details a turbulent email affair between BevJ@frederic-gerard.com and Maximillian@miller&morris.com. Useful terms include the wink :-) the kiss :-* and the horny smile }:-), but you can create your own, such as the horny drooling smile }:-)...

If the object of your affections isn't impressed or appears disinterested, you can always say they misunderstood the teasing tone. Sexual harassment? Not if you're careful and can read the responses objectively.

Relationship counsellor, William Fitzgerald, explains that email favours the creative wordsmith over the handsome office bimbo. "Picking up someone at the local pub requires a combination of confidence, social skill and the right clothes," he says. "You need neat hair, quick thinking, suave delivery, congruent body language and no lingering halitosis – a tall order for many office geeks who are slaving away at earning a living. You don't need those attributes in email, it's easier to be a Cyrano de Bergerac in the wings than Roxanne's paramour in the spotlight."

So it's a healthy thumbs up from the sex doc, and good news for those of us office pranksters with that rare commodity – a GSOH.

There are three main types of email affair.

The first is where you're just larking around with a fun-loving colleague to relieve your boredom. Then there's email as a propositioning tool for cowards. Thanks to its faceless nature, you can easily use email to ask someone out, without having to rely on body language to gauge their response. Design engineer Michael had an unusual experience while he was working in Seattle. "At one of my parties, at the end of the evening (well early morning actually), I found a cryptic note with an email address left on my pillow - no more smeared lipstick phone numbers in the electronic age. My only problem was to try and work out who it belonged to..."

You can also use email as a brush-off tactic. I'm not suggesting you dump a lover by email, but you can do what my accountant friend Maggie did at a nightclub recently: "I gave my email address to this bloke because he was rather persistent and I didn't want to give him my phone number... He's already mailed me, chatting me up, but this way I can just ignore him."

The third type of affair is the creative email sex romp, which is probably the best fun you can ever have at your keyboard. Here, the sharing of sexual fantasies and role play can be coupled with the frantic pace of email exchange across a short period of time, evoking the intimacy, rhythm and continuity of a real life sexual encounter.

"Our email sex involved a series of sexual innuendoes and scenarios," confesses Sarah, a computer journalist. "It was all very silly and fantasy-based. We'd end up in the shower together, and he'd ask me to bend over and reach for the soap! It was all in our heads and we'd both get extremely hot. It was all very raunchy!

"Email is perfect for conducting saucy affairs like this because you can get away with so much more. It has the immediacy of a phone call, yet you end up baring your soul more because it has an anonymous feel to it. There's a lot of anticipation and potential for mischief. Best of all, you can get completely distracted while the rest of the office thinks you're working incredibly hard."

Maggie says she's had similar encounters. "I once had email sex with a mate of mine in a different office – it was so steamy that both of us got really hot under the collar and he had to go to the toilet to calm down."

Sally, a PR consultant, embarked on a flirtatious email fling which lasted three months.

"He started it. Not long after we first met (nothing had happened), he sent a rather frank email and we took it from there. Of the many saucy things he sent me, my favourite was one which involved lots of xxxs and details of exactly where he wanted to put them."

Abusing your email could be a shortcut to your P45 – and you might even end up in the divorce courts.

These days, abusing your email could be a shortcut to your P45 – and you might even end up in the divorce courts.

Back in the US, one of Michael's friends got into a rather dangerous email liaison. "Paul signed into a Connect 4 game site which has a chat room, so you can pass messages as you play and choose who you play against. He started a relationship with a 19 year old from Chicago who thought Paul was 23 (he's really in his late 40s and married with kids). But when he found it wasn't going anywhere, he found her mother on the same site and became an early 40-something to woo her.

"They corresponded daily through a Yahoo! account in his fictitious name, and through the chat room, and she thought he was a separated English expat, rather than a married man living in America with his young family.

"Come the school holidays, Paul's wife and kids returned to Blighty and he hatched plans to meet up with his email girl-

WHAT SHE MEANS > WHAT SHE SAYS > WHAT SHE MEANS > WHAT SHE SAYS > interesting email Peter WHAT SHE MEANS > You're sacked, sonny.

Inevitably, Sally's work started to suffered: "All I did was think about what cheeky things I could write to him and when I was going to receive my next email. His emails were always the ones I opened first, and it was obvious to anyone around me that I was reading them, because I had a huge smile on my face. No joke - I checked my email about every two minutes. Email is good for this kind of thing because you can go ahead and get carried away without being embarrassed. Also, I think it recreates the old thing of romantic letters between lovers."

These days, thanks to company-wide IT networks, you don't even need to be on the same floor as the recipient. A colleague of mine once had email sex with a workmate 20 floors above. Far less messy than the real thing.

But can such saucy email dalliances get you into trouble? One obvious problem is if the object of your affections is called John Smith or Sarah Jones. There are bound to be loads of them in every company, and you don't want to accidentally email the wrong person, do you?

Another risk is that your recipient is forwarding your naughty emails around the office for a laugh. But a far more serious problem is being rumbled by Big Brother, in the guise of your company's IT department. Daniel Walker from Dawson Walker Communications explains: "One of my clients is Hyperchannel, an American company which distributes a product developed as a surveillance tool by the FBI. It's an unobtrusive artificial intelligence system that can monitor and build a footprint of your personal behaviour – right from the moment you come through the office door. The computer can detect when you're doing something unusual that differs from your footprint, such as emailing your loved one 20,000 times a day...

"More commonly, though, it's standard for major global and European corporations to use a Net nanny to stop staff surfing the Internet for sexual and pornographic material. Net nannies can be used to filter company email systems and find certain sexual words. Suspicious network managers can easily access your email password and retrieve all your emails."

friend. This caused him some concern, as the photo he'd sent was a few years out of date. He'd even gone to the trouble of getting some fake ID, and made sure everything was done in cash so there wouldn't be any credit card transactions to give the game away.

"In the end she rumbled him because the plane tickets were in his real name. She was mightily pissed off to say the least, and very threatening. Definitely a 'bunny in the boiler' moment."

And in New York last year, 63 year old Francis Kolb tried to murder his wife with a butcher's knife, explaining to police that he suspected she was having a cyber sex affair with a younger man called Marcus.

So there you have it. While there's no such thing as the electronic orgasm (yet), office email can deliver the next best thing – virtual foreplay. The stakes are high if you're after a spot of extra marital activity and you don't have any mates in the IT department to bail you out, but it can certainly brighten up your Monday morning. im

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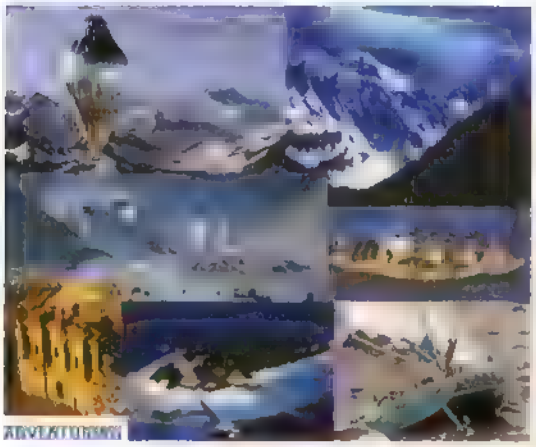


ADVENTURISM

Get a sense of adventure

Thinking of following in the footsteps of Captain Scott, Chris Bonington (www.bonington.com) and Richard Branson? If you're into all things crazy, exhausting, daring and downright dangerous, this simple site could be just the ticket. There are sections for all types of adventurer – mountain, land, sea, white water, scuba, hideaway and racing.
www.adventure-mag.com

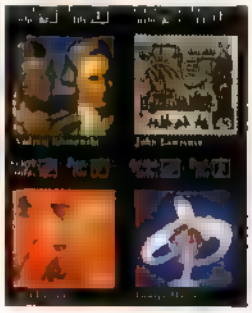
Can't stand your Clarkes? Hacked off with your Hush Puppies? Then wander over to some new sites dedicated to the art of sports footwear. Sneaker Builder lets you create your dream trainer from different designs and colours for the heel, toe, sole, laces and side.
www.sneaker builder.com

Or if you're mad keen on sports shoes, from plimsolls and green flash Dunlops to the latest Nikes and Reeboks, try the glossary of all things trainer at Charlie's sneaker pages. Kickin'.
www.sneakers.pair.com

But if that doesn't shoehorn itself into your favourites, try Sneaker Central for size. It's aimed at people who are serious about trainers. If you're completely barmy about a favourite pair, you can even submit a photo of them.
www.sneakercentral.com

Contemplating a millennium baby? You might be a bit late by now. But for anyone having children, Babyworld is the mother of all sites. It has a comprehensive baby database covering the lot from conception to toddler. It could do more to include fathers, though. Most women get a bloke involved at some point. Unless they're Jodie Foster, that is.
www.babyworld.com

Stamps used to be all the rage when I was a nipper. And, despite the advent of computer games and the like, according to



the Royal Mail, stamps are just as popular today. Well, you can't post a letter without one. Royal Mail is justly proud of its arty Millennium stamp collection, and has dedicated an entire site to the special range. So if licking the back of the Queen's head is your cup of tea, take a look..
www.millenniumstamps.co.uk

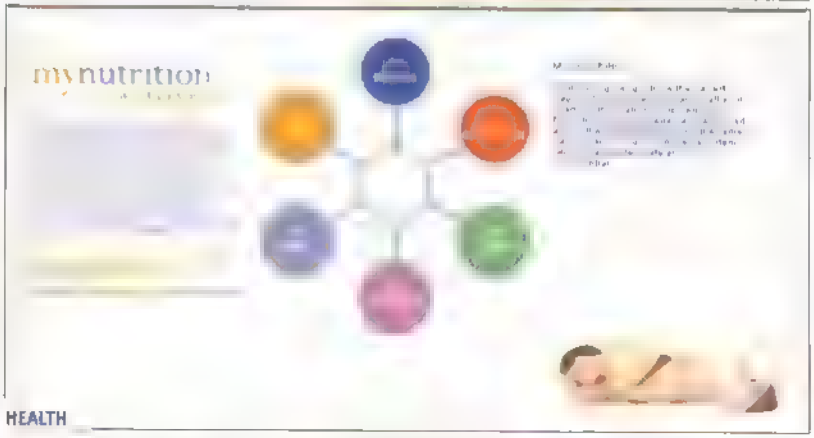
Apart from the fact that they come out of a chicken, what do we know about eggs? They lost Edwina Currie her job, they're popular at Easter, and they'll keep your love life in cracking form. So says the British Egg Information Service site. Just what you need to get laying again...
www.britegg.co.uk

Bonham aims to prove that auctions of antique headgear and the like are anything but old hat. It's managed to make the world of top-flight auctions slightly more accessible, but the emphasis is on 'slightly' – expect to be vetted before you can become a member.
www.bonhams.com

Sitting at a computer is hardly the route to a healthy lifestyle. You might be doing yourself more harm (watch your back, eyes and RSI) than good. But while you're still at the screen, visit Safety Shop Online and choose yourself a screen filter, wrist support and footrest.
www.safetyshop.com

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, allegedly. The Gardening Club will tell you how to ensure that they have adequate protection, with expert advice and a green-fingered forum. As the warmer weather tempts folk to take up their trowels, this site should blossom.
www.gardening-club.co.uk

Golf's a funny old game. Players birdie, dogleg par fours and then retire to the 19th. There are plenty of new sites promoting



HEALTH

Inner purity now available online

If you're already getting plenty of healthy exercise (or even if you're not), why not give your digestive system an overhaul? My Nutrition aims to be a one-stop shop for everything to do with healthy food, eating and supplements. You can even fill out a real marathon of a health questionnaire.
www.mynutrition.co.uk

eyor

phone calls are expensive. So save time and this month's essential sites

TRANSPORT

I'm Concorde, fly me

British Airways has been beefing up the Concorde part of its site to celebrate 30 years of supersonic passenger flight. It's well worth a look, if only to play the interactive game where you pilot a Concorde from London to New York, picking up floating bottles of champagne for the passengers along the way.
www.britishairways.com/concorde

golf as more than a way to spoil a good walk. TV Golf has a daily news service covering everything from big tournaments to how your local course is managed.
www.tvgolf.net

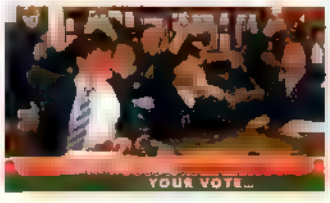
If you need a set of irons or a nice diamond-pattern sweater, UK Golf Discount will suit you to a tee.
www.ukgolfdiscount.com

Or perhaps billiards and pool are more your thing. While the pub's closed you could check out Riley's new site, which is based around its baize-related range of sports equipment.
www.rileyleisure.com

In redesign corner, is the much-hyped Capital Radio site, with DJs, music, news, weather, horoscopes, charts and a virtual tour round the studio. It's a great site, and has all been designed to look like a radio – what else? Inspired. No, really, it is. Tune in to find out why it's a turn on.
http://capitalfm.com

Wales is putting itself on the Internet map. As well as teaching you how to pronounce the longest place name in the UK, the North Wales site will tell you about Welsh tourism and business.
www.north-wales.com

One of the most popular things to do in Wales (that doesn't involve sheep) is walking. The anonymous author of Walking Wales says: "Imagine walking behind a waterfall, smelling a forest after a shower of rain, feeling the atmosphere in a haunted building" (sounds intriguing), or "listening to a male voice choir" (absolutely out of the question).
www.walking-wales.co.uk



You can also find out what the advent of a Welsh Assembly could mean in terms of passport and visa requirements if the Welsh go ahead and vote to become semi-autonomous.
www.assembly.wales.gov.uk

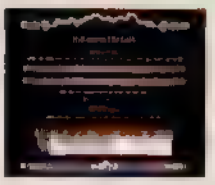
And finally, if you thought you'd seen the trailer for *Star Wars Episode One: The Phantom Menace*, then think again. Lucasfilm has been clogging up the Web again with a new teaser. This time, the offering is two and a half minutes long (25Mb in high res, so beware the phone bill) and focuses on the political aspects of the story rather than on little wee Anakin. Bless.
www.starwars.com/episode-i/news/trailer

Why do they *do* that?

Some readers of a more sensitive disposition might find this site disturbing. It's a play on pure shock value. Take four of the cuddly characters of AA Milne's classic children's stories (Pooh, Piglet, Tigger and Eeyore) and photograph them in the compromising positions of the Kama Sutra. Surely the product of a very sick mind.
www.planetx.com/pooh

This irreverent site, dedicated to the beautiful game, has come up with an absolute winner.

Take the peculiar goings on at Lancaster Gate and animate them in the style of South Park, complete with phraseology. The result is the three-part cartoon, Wembley Park. The designers have even managed to include the phrase "Oh my God, they killed Glenny" in each of the five-minute animations. Sweet.
www.wembleypark.com



Conspiracy theories thrive on the Internet, and this might just be the ultimate site for all things with a sinister, twisted government/alien plot behind them. If you're into this sort of thing, you must pay a visit to The Lock. But that could be exactly what *they* want you to do...
www.geocities.com/pentagon/bunker/4669

Funerals To Die For starts with the cheery greeting: "There are 5.96 billion people living on this planet. They're all going to die." This is the perfect site for the ultimate control freak – FTDF lets you plan your own funeral in the same way as you might a wedding, selecting venue, readings, hymns, flowers, special requests. Don't be late...
www.funeralstodiefor.com

FREE INTERNET: THE FACTS

- X-STREAM WAS THE FIRST INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDER TO OFFER FREE INTERNET ACCESS.
- X-STREAM IS THE ONLY ISP TO OFFER INTERNET ACCESS VIA AN 0800 FREEPHONE NUMBER.
- X-STREAM IS FIRST AND FOREMOST AN INTERNET COMPANY. FREE INTERNET ACCESS IS OUR BUSINESS!

To find out more about The X-Stream Network and to access X-Stream's FREE 0800 service, visit our website or call the number below. We may only be the UK's second largest free ISP, but we try harder and there is no other ISP on the planet with a more appealing offer.

the x-stream network
100% FREE Internet access

FREE 0800 CALLS • FREE POP 3 E-MAIL • FREE PERSONAL WEBSITE

www.x-stream.com 0800 358 5678

SPOTLIGHT ON...

On a screen near you...

Cinema survived the video generation and seems to be successfully embracing the Internet revolution. Rachel Weisbach joins the luvvies for a guide to what film buffs can find online

With 83 per cent of the UK population now classing themselves as cinema-goers, it's not surprising the Internet is an absolute haven for all things film-related. Whether you're after news, reviews or interviews, there are thousands of sites to fulfill your needs. They range from the official, studio-run Web site, through the professional online magazine, to the site set up by an ardent film fan as a labour of love.

It's easy to see the appeal of the Web's blossoming supply of film content. After all, why wait for that hot film deal to be rehashed in tomorrow's newspaper or next week's movie magazine when it'll turn up online within minutes? And it's hard to remember a time when the summer blockbusters, Oscar favourites, and everything else in between, hit the cinemas without an accompanying array of online footage. Between them, these sites provide everything to keep the average film fanatic happy

Dark Horizons

This is a well designed, US-based round-up of movie news and rumours. It has production news, scurrilous film gossip, downloadable trailers, movie posters and the odd test screening result. It's also easy to gain access to past round-ups. But for all its flashy graphics and detailed stories, Dark Horizons doesn't really offer anything new. It's worth an occasional visit, but it's not distinctive enough to stand out from the pack.

www.darkhorizons.com

The Movie-Page

If you're after a decent little news and gossip site, this is for you. It also has a major ace up its sleeve – one of the biggest collections of movie posters available online.

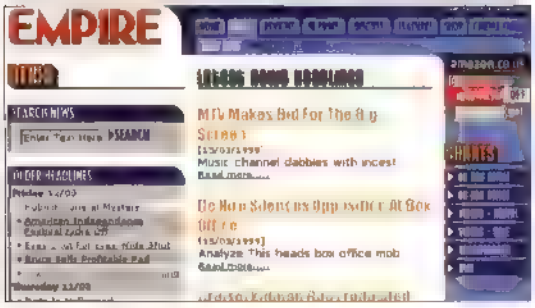
Browsing through the entire list is a long but rewarding task, with everything from recent blockbusters, through overseas rarities, to teaser posters. Even forthcoming movies are included.

www.movie-page.com

Cinescape Online

An offshoot of the US movie magazine (which specialises in sci-fi and horror films), this is one of the finest places to visit for the latest film production titbits. You can look at posters, trailers and test screenings, though these tend to be for forthcoming movies. Cinescape's main selling point is its access to stills of new films – this is often the best place to catch your first glimpse of future films. Recent scoops include snaps from the Austin Powers sequel (*The Spy who Shagged Me*) and the new James Bond movie (*The World Is Not Enough*).

www.cinescape.com



Empire Online

The Web site for Britain's biggest selling film magazine has undergone a makeover, and is now one of the most comprehensive film Web sites based in the UK. You can get daily movie news, reviews of the week's releases, and there's a huge database of over 4,000 past *Empire* reviews. The site keeps tabs on the hottest films in production and you can buy all sorts of merchandise online. This site has linked up with Scoot to offer UK cinema listings – simply key in where you live and the film you want to see, and you're presented with a choice of cinemas within seconds.

www.empireonline.co.uk

Ain't It Cool News

The granddaddy of all movie gossip Web sites. Run from the bedroom of Texan movie buff Harry Knowles, this prolific site has become such a phenomenon that even Hollywood studios use it as a reference too. Knowles specialises in news and gossip from forthcoming movies, especially reviews of advance film screenings, which his avid followers post to the site. Unfortunately, Knowles' irritating opinions are littered around the site like discarded popcorn. But this aside, there's no denying the compulsive qualities of the site itself. There are reviews of films that are up to six months away from release, so you can find out whether it's worth the trip to the multiplex. And its snippets of gossip, including a comprehensive weekly round-up of production news, are generally spot-on.

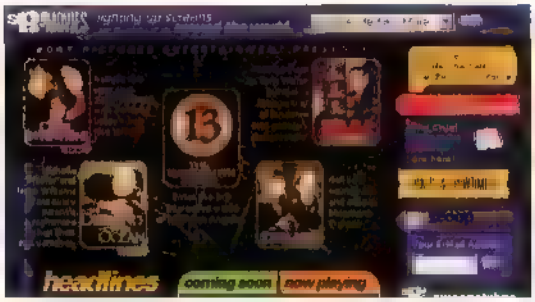
www.aint-it-cool-news.com

Film Unlimited

If you prefer a slightly artier angle to your movies, you'll be well served by Film Unlimited. This is The Guardian's own contribution to online film coverage, and part of its revamped 'Unlimited' brand. You'll find a compilation of news, reviews and interviews from the week's newspaper, with one or two bonus online features thrown in. There are some lengthy articles, but if you're genuinely interested in the subject, you'll have the patience to plough through them. No frills, but good value.

www.filmunlimited.co.uk

site surveyor



Sony Pictures Entertainment

As with most movie Web sites, Sony's focuses on films that are showing in the US. There's a good news section, and its Coming Soon section includes every Sony film you're likely to see before the end of the year. It's one of the better studio sites and a lot of thought has been given to its content and design.

www.spe.sony.com

Hollywood Online

Focusing on the week's new US releases, this site is great if you're looking for press information, pictures or trailers for anything that's appeared in cinemas in the past year or so. There's a huge archive of coming attractions to download, and some of its special features are excellent.

www.hollywoodonline.com

Universal

A recent overhaul means the Universal Pictures site has a few neat new features, including on-set reports from forthcoming movies, a comprehensive future films section and a link to the sister site for October Films, its arthouse division.

www.universalpictures.com

Popcorn

Part of Carlton online, this British site offers daily movie news and a cinema search. Input the name of your favourite actor and you'll be given a list of films that they've appeared in. Input a film title and a location and it'll give you a list of the nearest cinemas showing your choice of movie. This can be useful if you haven't got a local listings paper. The site is feature-driven, with regular competitions and trailers to download. Future possibilities include a link to Carlton's digital movie channel, so stay tuned...

www.popcorn.co.uk

Warner Brothers

This site doesn't offer much more than a bunch of links to its film Web sites, such as You've Got Mail (at www.youvegotmail.com). There's none of the studio briefings that others provide, the Coming Soon section is limited to imminent releases, and its selection of Classic Sites is dubious – should *The Avengers* qualify as a classic? On the plus side, the archive section offers literally every film-specific site that Warner Brothers has ever created.

www.wbmovies.com

The Internet Movie Database

The IMDb, as it has become known, is an essential site for movie buffs, and the closest thing the Web has to the likes of Halliwell's movie guide. It lists nearly every film and TV programme ever made, as well as every actor, actress, director or crew member you can think of, no matter how obscure. The search facility makes it easy to jump to what you're looking for, as long as your spelling is accurate.

www.imdb.com

New Line

One of the leading US independent studios, New Line has a fun site with unique features, including an online merchandise store, which has had some reasonably good sales. There's the added bonus of its Coming Soon section, which features photos from all its future releases

www.newline.com

Pathe

The French-owned, British-based distributor Pathe doesn't offer anything too flashy, merely a series of links to its movie-specific sites. But if you're seeking info on any film it's released in the past two years, you'll find it here.

www.pathe.co.uk

UIP

Fellow Euro distributor, UIP, provides lots of movie links on its site, as well as links for different countries. There are screensavers for some movies and more of those popular trailers. The site reflects the difficulty facing British sites because UK release dates are so far behind the US.

www.uip.com

20th Century Fox

The company with the name that's about to pass its sell by date has a good British site. It promotes upcoming content, with production details, trailers and snaps from its forthcoming titles. There are competitions and a searchable archive, as well as a retail area in which you can read video blurbs and check prices.

www.fox.co.uk

Brit Movie

There are few sites more jingoistic than this one. You'll find nothing but UK-specific content here. View the top 10 films at the UK box office, search a database of movies made in the UK – from *The Bridge over the River Kwai* to *Shakespeare in Love*, and everything in between.

www.britmovie.co.uk

BritMovie

Odeon

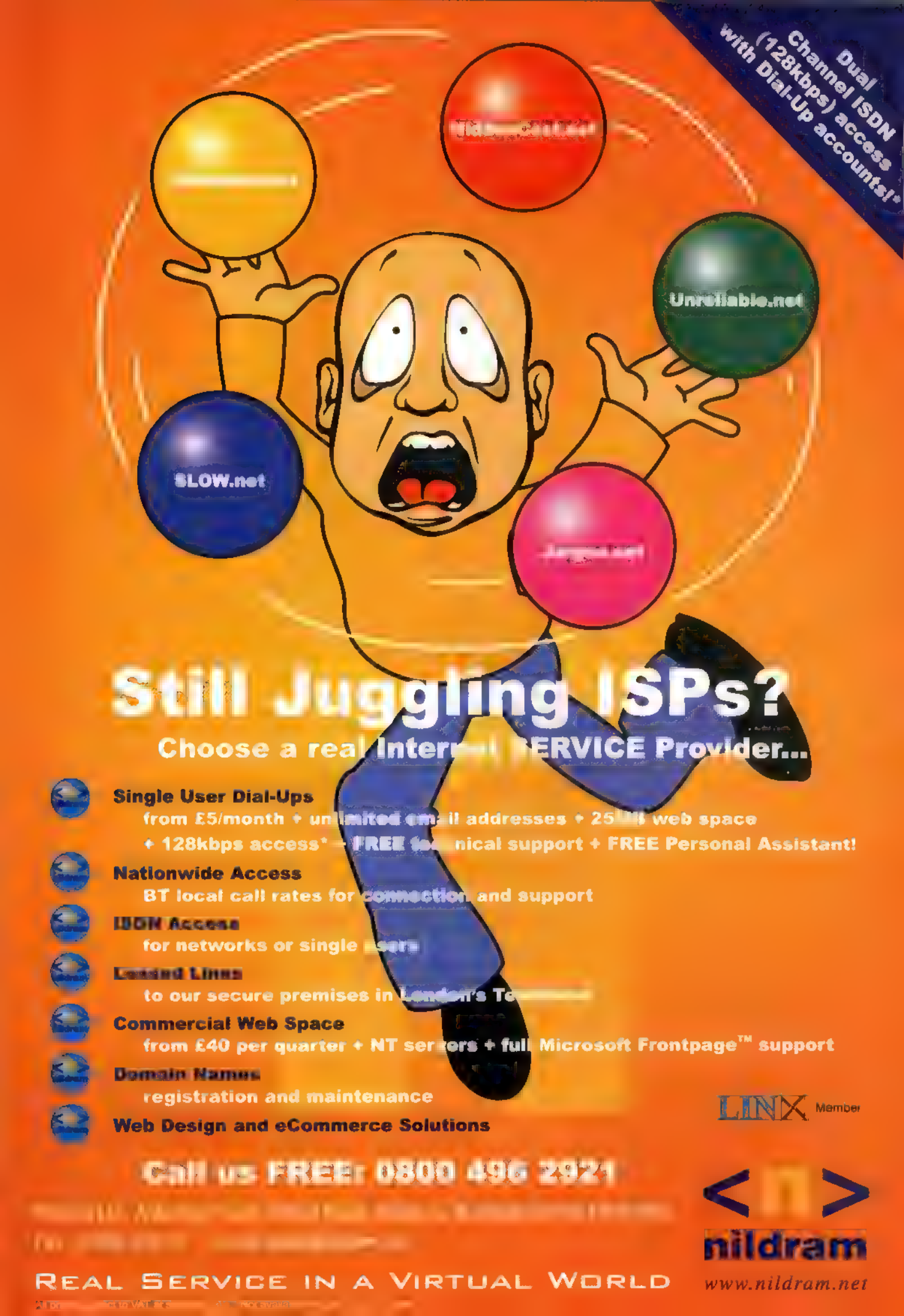
Odeon's site is well worth a visit – you can book tickets online, a unique feature in this round-up. Reviews of current releases are available, and you can find out what's on at your local.

www.odeon.co.uk

The Radio Times

Over at the Beeb, there are plans to let the film part of this site become a money-spinning entity in its own right. At the moment, though, the content revolves around the film coverage offered in the weekly magazine. So it's useful for selecting your movie viewing on all the channels over the next seven days. The site offers contributions from the father/daughter team of Barry Norman – who deals with the more recent film content – and Emma Norman, who reviews the latest video releases. Expect the latter to be the base for the money spinner. Barry's likely to be used to improve the database so that this becomes more than just an augmented listings site.

www.radiotimes.beeb.com/films


Dual Channel ISDN (128kbps) access with Dial-Up accounts!*
Unreliable.net
SLOW.net
Still Juggling ISPs?
Choose a real Internet SERVICE Provider...
Single User Dial-Ups
from £5/month + unlimited email addresses + 25 MB web space
+ 128kbps access* + FREE technical support + FREE Personal Assistant!
Nationwide Access
BT local call rates for connection and support
ISDN Access
for networks or single users
Leased Lines
to our secure premises in London's Te
Commercial Web Space
from £40 per quarter + NT servers + full Microsoft Frontpage™ support
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SITE OF THE MONTH

More than the bare necessities

As well as entertaining a family audience, Disney.co.uk aims to educate visitors with its huge range of characters. Richard Dinnick finds an impressive site brimming with animation

Having been overlooked for the location of its European resort 10 years ago, you might think Disney doesn't like the UK. This would have been reinforced if Disney failed to launch a UK-based Web site that lived up to the mighty presence of the US version. But, as Walt would have wanted, there's a happy ending to this tale.

Disney Online, part of the Buena Vista Internet Group (BVIG), has unveiled Disney.co.uk. "More families and children have started to get online, so it was a good time to change the site," says Jaki Ellenby, director of promotional content and marketing at Disney Online.

Referred to as the sister site of Disney.com, the UK version has fully localised content. "As the biggest provider of family content on the Internet, creating a UK-specific Disney site was a natural step," explains Chafic Najia, VP of BVIG (Europe). "We've vastly improved the former Disney site, introducing new content and engaging activities that are fun and educational, while providing a one-stop information resource for everything Disney."

This means a lot of thought and effort has gone into producing the Disney UK site. "Whether it's a film or a theme park – the base is the same," says Ellenby. "It's essentially a story we're telling. We're about creating fun, and the Web site is no different." To emphasise this, visitors to the site are referred to as guests – as you would be in one of the company's many theme parks.

Children and families can test their skills with games, steer the action in interactive comic book adventures, and stretch their brains with general "mind-expanding" fun.

The UK Disney site has been designed for children and their families to play and learn. The *Bug's Life* section is now complete

SITE OF THE MONTH

You can get information on all the latest Disney films and videos, find out what's happening at Disneyland Paris (www.disneylandparis.com) or on the Disney Channel, and check out the latest games from Disney Interactive (another part of BVIG).

And there's more than one way to find what you're after.

"People think in a linear fashion, but the Net isn't like that, so the site lets you access the information in a number of ways," says Ellenby.

"We've reworked the hierarchy of the site to make it easier to browse, and we've introduced offline activities as we think these are missing in the market."

So, if you want specific information on a Disney product or attraction, you have a choice of how to find it. Buttons on the left-hand side of the screen take you directly to what you want to know.

Alternatively, you can press one of the four other buttons on the right-hand side (Brainfood, Funstuff, Games and Stories) to visit fun and educational activities, such as interactive storybooks, games, Disney sounds, and Windows wallpaper designs and activities, such as how to draw Mickey Mouse. Even if you can't read, click on the image of your favourite character and you'll be taken to a range of activities dedicated to your choice.

The site has innovations such as D-Toys – games and activities can be downloaded to be played, traded, collected and emailed to friends – representing a real club feeling for kids. This is augmented by competitions, such as the treasure hunt. This competition

Site Of The Month

Disney.co.uk

Designers
Disney Online

Development time
Six months
"When we sat down and decided to redesign the site, it took about six months, but we're constantly updating and enhancing the content and design."

Development costs
Unable to estimate. The site contains aspects of the former UK version and bits from other parts of the online Disney empire. "We're committed to the Net and have invested incredible amounts in it," says Jaki Ellenby.

URL
www.disney.co.uk

persuades you to explore more of the site, as you have to search for characters from *Lion King II: Simba's Pride*. If you find all the lions, warthogs and meerkats, you complete the 'Circle of Life' and you get entered into the prize draw.

This type of feature means you've always got plenty to do on the site, so Disney will only be updating fortnightly, though some pages will need changing more regularly. The cartoon images on the round buttons will rotate, meaning even Mickey isn't guaranteed a regular spot. "But you'll always be able to find him somewhere on the site," Jaki Ellenby assures me.

The CD-ROMs area of the site lets you select a CD and play a game. Go to the Mulan section, for instance, and you can dress the Japanese warrior girl in a variety of outfits and print your creations. In the Print Studio. There's also a line drawing of Mulan that you can print and colour in.

But, amazingly, you can't buy or download the CD-ROMs online. "We're working on a package to sell things online, but we want to be able to handle all the considerations that the section brings with it, such as returns, shipping and security," says Ellenby. "We won't launch something until we get it right."

There's a link to the Disney Channel, where you can view a listing of what's on and when. But this being Disney, a straightforward listing section would be dull. So, to jazz it up a bit, there are pages devoted to individual programmes, such as *101 Dalmatians* (yes, the film was made into a series), *Hercules* and *Pepper Ann*.

In the movies section, you come straight to a page dominated by the insect characters of *A Bug's Life*. There's a plethora of games, clips, and other fun stuff that kids will be interested in. You'll soon be able to find out where the latest Disney release is playing. "Listings is one of the enhancements we're working on – possibly with a third party," says Ellenby.

Unfortunately, there's no mention of the classics, such as *Snow White*, *The Aristocats* or even *The Lion King*. "The main reason for the Web site is to introduce new characters and new films," says Ellenby. "However, we're working on a new section of the site that deals with the history of Disney and the older films that'll include the classic characters."

The stories section of the site deserves some credit. As well as creating a fun-packed site, with plenty to entertain and engage children and parents, Disney Online has also managed to incorporate an educational theme. "Disney has always believed that learning can be fun. We're not a school, so we can add more fun to education."

And in the process of enhancing the site, Disney has literally linked with other Web sites that have children's entertainment and education in mind. When *A Bug's Life* was being released, for instance, it was an ideal opportunity to set up a deal with the Natural History Museum. Ellenby agrees: "There are a lot of good educational sites that might be better qualified in certain aspects than we are, and if we can work with them, we will."

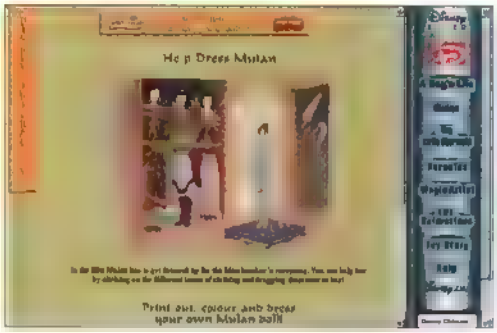
Disney Online wants the site to be seen as a safe haven for kids on the Web. It aims to teach children about the potential pitfalls of the Net by using a collection of online stories – the CyberNetiquette Comix. "A lot of parents feel threatened by the Internet, so rather than giving them a list to teach their children, we developed the Comix so that children could learn for themselves."

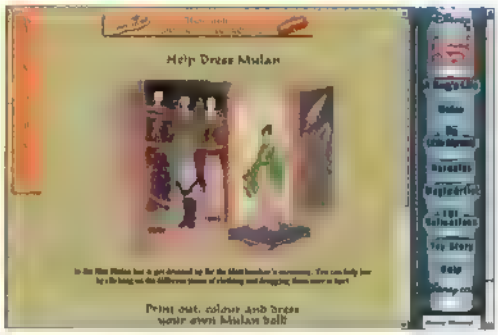
Characters such as Mickey Mouse, Goofy and the three little pigs appear in cautionary tales, which provide children with valuable Internet safety lessons in a fun and interactive cartoon style. "At Disney.co.uk, children and their parents now have a place on the Internet which has been designed for them to play and learn," says Chafic Nafa.

The animated nature of the site has been the chief criticism from our panel of design experts, but as Jaki Ellenby says: "Disney's about animation. People would be disappointed if the site didn't reflect that." Even so, a version has been set up so that those without Shockwave can still enjoy the site. "It's on a special server and we optimise the graphics to ensure it's as good as the Web allows it to be."

Overall, the message from Disney is clear – it's hit the beaches running and there's no stopping it. "We started with a base product and relaunched it," says Ellenby. "We'll build on that now. It's an ongoing project to make the site the top destination for families on the Web."

And with all the enthusiasm, imagination and dedication of the Disney Online team, how can the project fail?





You can help dress Mulan for the Matchmaker's ceremony by clicking on items of clothing and dragging them over to her

The magic of Disney meets the latest in multimedia and CD-ROM technology

What the professionals think

Derek Scanlon, creative director, iXL
"They say content is king and you can't get better content than Disney. But they also say it's how you use it that counts and, sadly, this site doesn't use it very well. The site is so graphic-heavy that it takes great patience to navigate from page to page, and once you get there, it's usually just an elaborate advert for CD-ROMs. The Bug's Life section was 'coming soon', and if you try to send an email to Ariel, a coding error strips the @ from your email address, making it impossible to send her anything. Looks like the bugs turned up after all."

Daryn Forster, MD, fig21
"As you'd expect, Disney's new site uses flawless graphics, so it's visually excellent and has all the content a kid could want. The drawback is it takes a while to download, so the care taken to keep a child's interest can be quickly negated. One of my pet hates is inconsistent navigation around sites, and in the quest for a variety of designs, the navigation has suffered. In general, though, a pretty damn good site. It's well targeted and executed, and is loads of fun for all the family – or an afternoon that's dragging in the office."

Rupert Sliwa, senior designer, Clockwork Web
"As a portal to Disney's UK content, the home page works rather well. But after the reasonably good front end, the design theme collapses and the visitor is abandoned in a wilderness of wildly varying content and graphic styles. Being a family site, you'd expect Disney to take care of you, but the site never really grabs your hand and leads you in the way you'd like it to. I'd like to have seen far more of the fantastic range of characters that the company has at its disposal. A case of too many cooks?"

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BEHIND THE SCENES...

Top sites for May

Experts tell us how this month's top sites were built. Get the lowdown on the products webmasters use, the inside track on site budgets, and tips on how to use the latest technologies

Bristol Zoo Online Aquarium

Conservation meets new media showcase to produce an innovative site that was truly a labour of love

It's always good to see ground-breaking projects on the Web, and this fishy offering fits the bill. You'll need some extra technology to see it at its glorious best, but once you've got the downloads, you won't be disappointed.

Conceived initially as a showcase for new media talent in the south west, the site is also a fun way for young people to learn about conservation issues. Hence the collaboration between Bristol Zoo and an organisation called, ironically, SWIM (South West Interactive Media).

"The idea was to get away from presenting information in text form, and make it as dynamic as possible without copying either film or telly techniques," says Beth Porter, chair of the board at SWIM.

The project can't be extended without more sponsorship, so the potential audience will be restricted to people with the technology and bandwidth to view the Aquarium properly. Beth explains: "We were all working on this thing for nothing and in our own spare time, so we decided to go for certain format and delivery standards, rather than trying to make it accessible to every platform."

"The Aquarium adds a unique dimension to the Zoo's Web site," says Geoffrey Greed, director of Bristol Zoo. His understatement couldn't be more true. As you learn about river and sea-dwelling creatures, fish swim past and talk to you, adding plenty of interaction.

Beyond the usual skills needed to build a Web site, the project also included film-makers, scriptwriters, a poet and a choreographer. There's a tiny VRML ballet for clown knifefish, and a specially-commissioned poem in Flash.

Elaine Hernen

www.bristolzoo.org.uk
Design ★★★★
Content ★★★★

MORE ANIMAL MAGIC
Edinburgh Zoo www.edinburghzoo.org.uk
Deep-Sea World www.deepseaworld.com
Chester Zoo www.demon.co.uk/chesterzoo

HOW DO THEY DO THAT?

Building the site was a team effort, and everyone who worked on the project gave their time and expertise for free. The Aquarium includes Director movies in Flash and Shockwave, and some pretty heavy VRML work in the 3D graphic environment, so it's quite a substantial gift. Beth Porter estimates the cost of the site would be around £175,000. She says: "It was a labour of love. It took over a year and a half, with everyone working nights and weekends. It was hard work, but we loved every minute of it." The site also received sponsorship from South West Arts and BT.

Ride the Net

The campaign to promote cycling begins with this well presented site

Ride the Net is a £400 million campaign for a 3,000-mile national cycle network. It also promotes cycling as a practical, modern, safe and attractive method of travel.

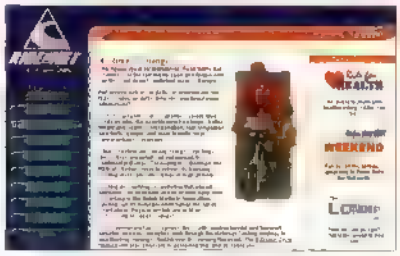
The marketing group responsible for promoting the project, MMA, was given a budget of £1 million – including a £20,000 donation from Madison, a distributor of bicycle parts and accessories – to spend on the site's construction. So what has the money brought to the cycle-riding masses?

The answer is a decent little site. The design has a clean feel to it and is sprinkled with a few pleasing JavaScript effects. Ride the Net uses a consistent colour scheme and a simple but effective navigation bar to help you find your way around.

"As the campaign and event programme grows, so will the Web site," explains Mark Jeffrey, director of MMA. "It'll be updated with news of events being planned all over the country, from now up to the summer 2000 launch."

The credit for the design goes to site builder Ian Hargreaves, of Proactive Golf Marketing. "A lot of the information was centred, but keeping it all on the same page would have made it unusable," he says. A large map of the national cycle network had to be included. But as most people would only be interested in their own area, an image map was created which linked to a cropped area of the main map.

Elaine Hernen



www.ridethenet.co.uk
Design ★★★
Content ★★★

ON YER BIKE
Environmental Transport Association
www.eta.co.uk
TransCycle www.transcycle.org
London Cycling Campaign
www.lcc.org.uk/lcc

British Airport Authority

Now you can choose a flight, order your duty free and find a parking space before you've even left for the airport

There'll be no more queues in the airport of the future. Smartcards will replace tickets and you'll book your parking months before your departure date. You can already order your duty free before you get to the airport.

Passengers don't usually associate these activities with the British Airport Authority. But its assistant director for corporate affairs, Steven Ormant, has taken advantage of the Internet to communicate the company's role in the airport of today and tomorrow.

"We haven't really publicised the fact that we provide these services," Ormant says. BAA's best-kept secret is Gatwick Airport, which is conducting online trials of parking and duty free facilities. Both ordering systems are well designed and easy to use. The design of the whole site is solid enough, and the scrolling news bars are a nice touch, but it can be difficult to differentiate between pages.

The flight scheduler is a real disappointment. It should be straightforward and fun to use, but filling in the From and To fields is overcomplicated, and the results are full of unexplained abbreviations.

That said, the overall impression is good. With a mix of customer information and corporate data, the site could have been confusing, but BAA has avoided any such disaster. *Chris Mugan*

www.baa.co.uk
Design ★★★
Content ★★★

COME FLY WITH ME

Birmingham International Airport www.bhx.co.uk
Luton Airport www.london-luton.com
London City Airport www.londoncityairport.como

HOW DO THEY DO THAT?

It took four months for IBM to develop BAA's Web site, including the online ordering and e-commerce. Ian Hughes, IBM's senior IT specialist, puts this short lead time down to the use of Lotus Domino and NetCommerce toolkits, which let him add complex functions to the site. "They're application server-based products, so we didn't need to use CGI," he says. "Lotus lets even non-technical people at BAA create information for the site."

Encyclopedia Britannica

The famous reference book is online, but is it worth paying for a subscription?

If you've ever used a decent CD-ROM encyclopedia, you'll know its leather-bound, multi-volume predecessor has had its day.

With Encyclopaedia Britannica (EB) online, the stalwart of the reference library has combined the classic encyclopedia with the Web. The result is over 72,000 articles, 10,000 illustrations and more than 75,000 definitions, including pronunciation guides and word histories. Wow.

EB's online manager, Jason Plent, admits that institutions have been able to subscribe to this service for three years. So why not the general public? "It's been possible, but we never marketed it," he says. "Now that more people are online at home, they're more willing to subscribe."

As well as an 'On This Day' feature, which brightens up the home page, the editors have devised sumptuous in-depth features with rich graphics, as well as opportunities to navigate data or follow hyperlinks down other avenues.

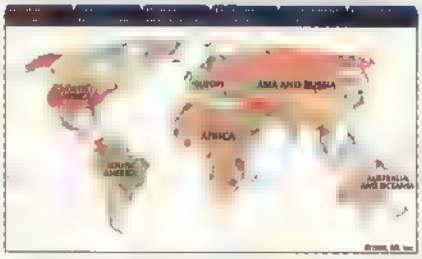
Being able to keep track of what you've found is vital, but the sophisticated bookmarking system lets itself down by not letting you mix Britannica and Net information. Still, £30 a year seems cheap, particularly if EB fulfills its promise to constantly update the site. *Chris Mugan*

www.eb.com
Design ★★
Content ★★★★★

LOOK IT UP

Ask Jeeves www.askjeeves.com
My Virtual Reference Desk www.refdesk.com
Ask an Expert www.askanexpert.com

HOW DO THEY DO THAT?



The brief for bringing the Encyclopaedia Britannica to the Web was to maintain and build upon its image as the world's most comprehensive reference product – a distinction it's held since 1768. Automatic search engines were abandoned and a special look-up program devised. The result was eBlast, a collection of informative sites researched by editors. Sites are checked for reliability, accuracy and longevity, and given a mark out of five.

CLICK HERE

Beenz means prizes

We've had free email, free Web sites, free ISPs and even free dial-up phone calls (thanks, X Stream). Well now you can get something else for nothing – Beenz. These little marvels have been referred to as a new "global Internet currency" and a "radical alternative to money", but they're essentially a loyalty card for the Web. Open an account and they'll give you 500 beenz as a starter. You receive beenz for visiting sites (from banner ads) or for spending time or money on those sites. There aren't many people using beenz at the moment, but you know how these things take off.
www.beenz.com

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[illegible]

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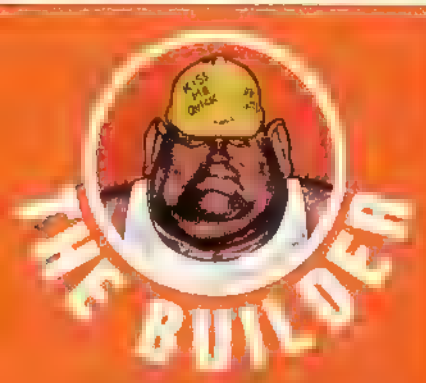


HE DONS HIS HARD HAT, SHUNS HIS [redacted] AND GOES BEHIND THE SCENES TO BRING US THE GOSSIP FROM THE WEB DESIGN INDUSTRY

Must be talking to an angel

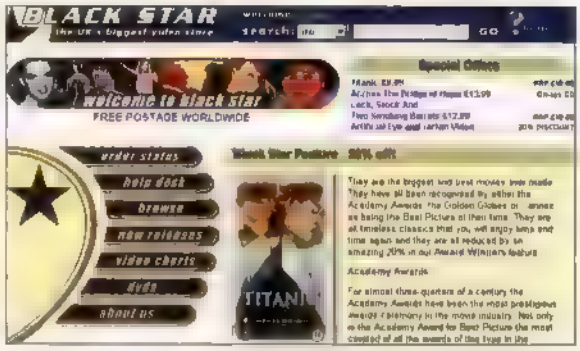
While hanging over the scaffolding, I get to see some tasty birds going by. And while some of them look heaven-sent, I haven't come across any pukka angels. Until now (and that was only because I had my laptop out at the time). Three 18 year old Essex girls have got the music industry buzzing without even singing a note. Nicolagirl, YesSarah and GalCarrie have formed Angels Online – the first Internet-only pop group. At the moment, they only operate from their site, charging punters about £6 a month for a subscription to their fanzine. And you won't hear any music without coughing up the dough. Trouble is, they won't stay Internet-only for long, as they've just been to Vegas to record the video for their first song – a cover of the 1986 Sinitta hit *So Macho*. So I reckon they'll be going into the chart faster than a XR3i with a full body kit and rear spoiler – even if AOL isn't happy with the URL

Tossed out

When I'm not wearing my ear protectors, I try to keep my lug holes to the ground. This month I've heard the language at Demon has been a bit blue. The MD, Roy Bliss, wrote the following in an email to all staff: "We've had two contrasting emails today from people departing from the company. One was, frankly, a tosser – no other word for it – and his departure undoes all the contribution he made." So why the insult? This is what the 'tosser' wrote: "I'm off due to an offer of a better salary and better promotion prospects. However, I've really enjoyed my time at the company." Ok, the geezer does go on to advise any of his fellow Demons wanting to follow in his footsteps that it's better if they apply for jobs from a free email account rather than a Demon one. Finally, he thanks a whole list of people that – surprise, surprise – doesn't include the gaffer, Mr Bliss.

Black Star

Online video store and all-round success story



It might sound like the worst sort of '70s sci-fi trash, but Black Star is the UK's biggest online video store. It has grown rapidly since it started selling films online, just over a year ago. The site aims to stock every video and DVD on release in the UK. But there's no movie news or gossip here. Even a link marked 'Oscars' has no mention of Gwynneth Paltrow blubbing over her statuette – just a list of past winners of the Best Picture Oscar, including *BraveHeart*, *French Connection* and *Forrest Gump*.

And talking of things being like a box of chocolates, this site lets you search for movies by their subject, name, star or director. The diversity of what's

on offer is huge – from children's comedies like *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* to serious titles dealing with death and the role of women, such as *Like Water of Chocolate*.

The Belfast-based company has over 50,000 titles on offer, and an express checkout takes only seconds to process your order. Security is tight, and you can track your videos to check when Black Star receives your order and when it's dispatched to your home. It'll even send you an email telling you which stage your order has reached.

Once you've placed an order, the site will recognise you the next time you visit. And you'll probably want to return – Black Star offers 20 per cent discounts on a changing list of titles, and charges nothing for postage and packing. You can even compile a hit list of all the films you'd like to own.

Richard Dinnick

www.blackstar.co.uk
Design ★★★☆☆
Content ★★★★★

VIDEODROMES

Filmworld www.filmworld.co.uk
Video Paradise www.videoparadise.com
Video Vault www.videovault.co.uk

eBid

Get yourself a bargain instead of wasting a fortune by scratching your nose

If you're not yet comfortable with the 24-hour shopping opportunity that is today's Web, the idea of an online auction house is likely to send a cold chill down your spine. But UK-based eBid is out to prove that it's not only perfectly safe, it's as easy as sticking your hand in the air to indicate your interest in an item for sale.

Once you've completed a registration form to receive a personal password, you're granted access to all sections of the site. There are more than 600 product categories for you to browse through, ranging from Antiques to Toys and Games.

To make a bid, just click on the item and select the Make bid button. Increments are chosen for you, but you do get to see what they are before committing yourself. You can also use a proxy vote – decide the maximum amount you want to offer for an item, and eBid will do the rest. The site also gives feedback pages for every individual who signs up. This lets buyers and sellers check out the past performance of auction participants, as well as credit ratings and general comments.

Gary Sewell, MD of eBid, believes this honour system will largely police the site, though it'll use contact information to ban those who abuse the system, and other protective measures are planned.

Elaine Hernen

www.ebid.co.uk
Design ★★★
Content ★★★

WHAT AM I BID?

Bullnet Online Auctions www.bullnet.co.uk/auctions
eBay UK www.ebay.com/uk
Eurobid www.eurobid.com/main.cfm

HOW DO THEY DO THAT?

The eBid Web site was constructed using Photoshop 5 for the graphics work, Allaire Homesite 3 for the HTML page-building and JavaScript and Perl for the coding. The auction system uses around 400k of Perl and runs on a Pentium II 350MHz, with a free BSD and Apache Webserver. The system has many features, including being able to list new, closing and busy auctions. A live accounting system lets you keep contact with your finances, which are held on secure servers at Netbanx.

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www.netdirect.net.uk

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For business the Internet means, what was once an interesting possibility is now a competitive necessity, and is becoming essential for small, medium and large organisations alike.

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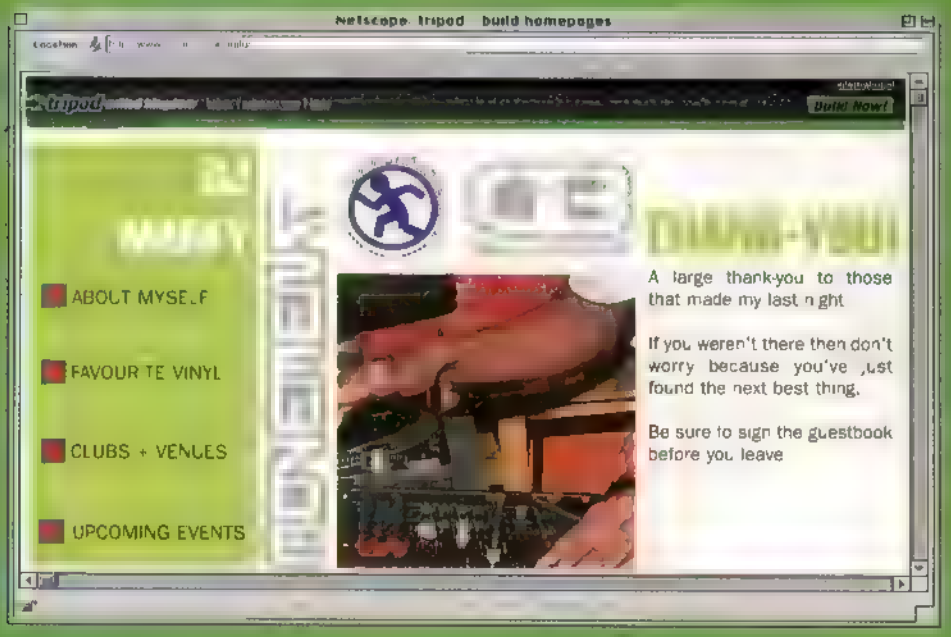

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May the tours be with you

Horsham-based Sports Mondia. has come up with a nice little earner and a good dea for Star Wars fans. It's offering flights, accommodation and a ticket to one of the first US screenings of Episode One – *The Phantom Menace* – for £699. You'll have to be able to travel between 18 and 21 May and you can only book on the Web. Apparently, the whole deal would normally set you back 1200 nicker, so there are limited places. The UK release date for the film is 16 July. By the way, Anakin Skywalker turns out to be Darth Vader.

All MOD cons

Remember that story about the bloke who tried to play an 'ard case villa'n and demand a few million quid for not messing with the MOD's satellites? Wel., a mate of a mate - who once sold a car to a bloke who knows someone who c.eans the floor at Northwood (the secret military base in Middlesex that contro.s the Skynet system) – reckons somebody's been arrested for the blag. But they'll never go to court because to put him on tr al would be an admission that it happened. Lucky beggar.

Building a better world

Some bad news for al. you cowboy bu.ders out there. The Federation of Master Bu.ders has .inked up w'th the Electronic Te.egraph to make shoddy work a thing of the past. The advice from both sites is to use a member of the Federation of Master Builders – never heard of 'em mese.f.

The Builder pulls up his trousers, then picks up the pieces industry cowboys leave behind. Overheard a rumour, and dying to tell someone? Email in strictest confidence to

This is Money

This site could be the answer to all your financial problems

This is money c.aims to be your personal finance advisor and its logo is a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow – so it promises a lot right from the beg nning. And given the diversity of content, you might think ANM (Associated New Media) has b tten off more than it can chew.

The company already has some excel.ent sites, such as This is London (**www.thisislondon.com**), Soccernet (**www.soccernet.com**) and the UK P.us search engine (**www.ukplus.co.uk**), but has it come up with another winner?

The opening page of this onl.ne consumer guide deals with the latest news from the financial world, with stories from the *Daily Mail*, *Mail on Sunday* and *Evening Standard*. It also has a sma.l business section, so the site seems to defy the consumer tag that ANM has given it.

This strange mix comes straight from the newspapers owned by the *Daily Mail* and Genera. Trust, and ANM is responsib.e for the company's on.ine activities. In the printed version, the diversity of the content means some sections can lose out due to a lack of space, but there are no such constrictions on the Web and the site aims to offer something for everyone.

Navigat on is simp.e and it's easy to find what you're looking for. Just select the topic you want from a menu that remains in a frame on the right of the page. Choose from a list of sections, inc.uding financial markets, savings, mortgages, tax and insurance. They a.l get their own pages that follow an established layout, inc.uding a 'Made easy' section.

The site even includes a page cal.ed 'How to spend it', which cheekily mixes consumer spend ng advice (à .a Which? Online at **www.which.net**) with tips on how to spend all the money you've made from fo.lowing the site's savings adv ce.

Richard Dinnick

HOW DO THEY DO THAT?

This site won't impress you with its animation or games – but the content is excellent. Produced by experienced journalists and edited by professional editors, the copy is well written and jargon-free. "We have a wealth of expertise at our fingertips," says Martin Dunn, editor in chief at ANM. "This means it's suitable for everyone, from the teenager confronted by the prospect of student loans, right through PEPs and TESSAs to pension advice." And ANM is the online division of the *Daily Mail*, so it saves a fortune by being able to reproduce the content of the newspaper.

www.thisismoney.com
Design ★★★
Content ★★★★★

SHOW ME THE MONEY

Financial Times www.ft.com
Endsleigh Insurance www.endsleigh.co.uk
Wise Money www.wisemoney.com

CLICK HERE

The future of soap opera is here

The year is 2034 – exactly 30 years since the start of the post-millennium drought. Household washing machines have been outlawed, but launderettes are a thriving industry. People are starting to smell and look good again. This is the scenario for the Web's first animated soap opera, *Launderama*. Washing specialist ADCO is targeting students. It even searched for a lookalike for its heroine, Glo White. It found 21 year old Ruth Higham, who had to dress up in stupid clothes and look silly. Nothing out of the ordinary for a student then...

www.acdo.co.uk

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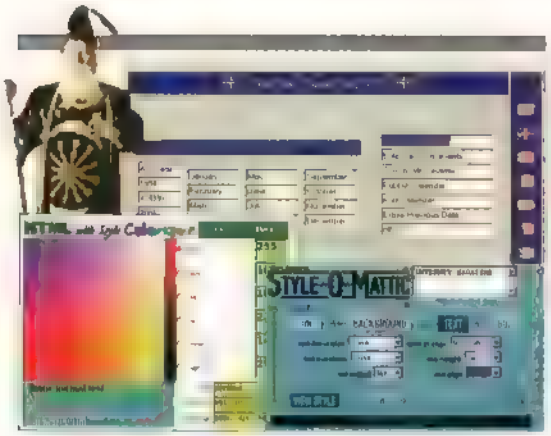
tried &te

Hot Downloads

After trawling sites all over the world, Plus the top 10 online wizards to sort



Top 10 online wizards

GIF Wizard
www.gifwizard.com

Banish bloated GIFs forever. An excellent online wizard to compress GIFs by up to 90 per cent. Costs about £20 a year.

JPEG Wizard
www.jpegwizard.com

Cut the fat away from your Web images and keep visitors interested with faster loading graphics.

3D Text Maker
www.3dtextmaker.com

Need a quick and easy rotating 3D banner? Insert your text, select the ingredients and let 3D Text Maker cook one up.

HTML Colorizer
www.webreference.com/html/tools/colorizer

A Java applet that helps you select the background and text link colours for your Web pages.

Web Site Garage
www.websitegarage.com

A range of services for maintaining and improving your Web site. It carries out site maintenance checks, optimizes graphics and can analyze your traffic. Tune in and tune up.

IE4 Channel Wizard
http://dostal.da.ru/workshop/delivery/channel/cdfwiz/intro.asp

This wizard helps you build channels without you having to get your head round the complicated technical details.

OnMouseOver Creator
http://neil.simplenet.com/javascript/mouseover.hts

Add interaction to your pages with mouseover link effects. This wizard creates all the necessary code, so all you have to do is provide the image names and their attributes.

Style-o-matic
www.builder.com/Authoring/CSS/ss12.html

This site makes it easy to develop style sheets. Just make a few selections and cut and paste the CSS code.

W3C HTML Validation Service
http://validator.w3.org

Check your pages for compliance with W3C HTML guidelines and other standards. A CSS checker is also available.

Calendar Generator
http://gallery.uunet.be/luxil/cal32-eng.htm

Fill out what you want to add to your online calendar and this useful wizard will generate the HTML for your own pages.

Font Service

Can't afford Adobe Type Manager? Fed up with Microsoft's Character Map? Then check out this powerful font management utility. Font Service sits in the taskbar and activates

fonts on the fly. You can group fonts into catalogues, which you can quickly install or uninstall. There are also excellent preview options – from font comparison to full character sets.

Price *£25*
Platforms *Win 9x*
Download size *2Mb*
www.ttp.co.uk

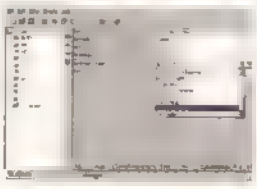
Frame-It

A hand-coders' utility that generates HTML frames using a simple wizard. You define your frames in three easy steps and get a preview to check. Frame-It can create complex frames that you can easily customise. Easy.

Price *Free*
Platforms *Win 3.x/9x/NT*
Download size *336k*
www.iinet.net.au/~bwh/frame-it.html

Style One

Style One is an easy to use cascading style sheet (CSS)



editor. The interface is split between two panes. You select a predefined rule (such as H1) on one side and change its properties on the other. Style One can then generate the style sheet code, which you can import into your existing pages. As CSS rules are order-dependent, they can easily be rearranged in Style One. You can also create your own class and ID rules.

Price *$15 (around £9)*
Platforms *Win 9x/NT*
Download size *1Mb*
www.3-t.com

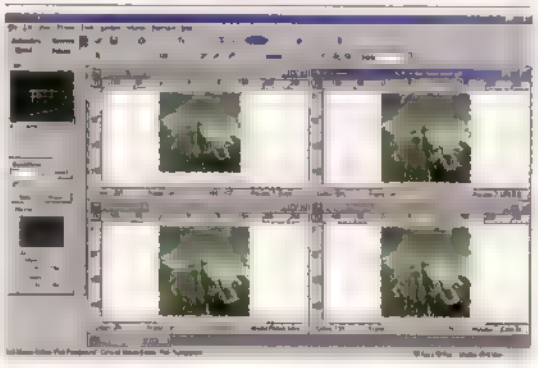
NetAnimator

This fun program creates animated graphics for your Web pages. You can make interactive animations, banners and active screen savers in no time. In some ways it works like Flash 3 – images are dropped onto a Stage via a timeline track. To animate paths, you place additional characters on the track and move them across the Stage. NetAnimator then generates the HTML and associated Java class or ActiveX files for you.

Price *$59.95 (around £36)*
Platforms *Win9x/NT*
Download size *2.7Mb*
www.incwell.com

Dimension 4

Dimension 4 synchronises your PC clock with the many time servers on the Internet. It can access over 100 time servers, so select a local



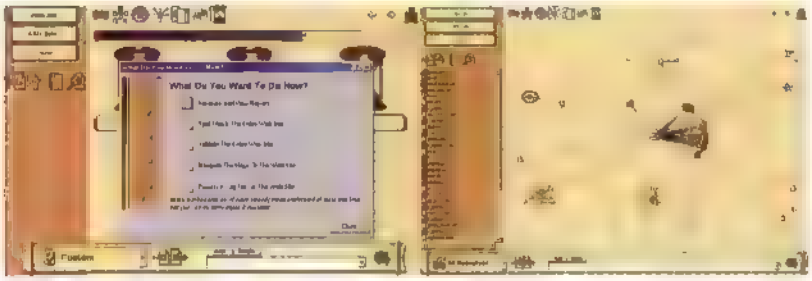
PiCoBello

A graphics optimisation editor with a comprehensive set of tools that let you achieve fast download times from your images. You can manipulate colour palettes, reduce colours, delete unwanted pixels and convert between formats, all in real time. The multi-pane preview is great for comparing your efforts. PiCoBello imports most common image formats, including animated GIFs. Built-in wizards help you to produce the best picture format for your needs. There's even an HTML optimiser thrown in.

Price *$36 (around £22 – lite) $340 (around £204 – pro)*
Platforms *Win 9x/NT*
Download size *3.9Mb*
www.picobello.com

sted

Greg Sloman brings you the products worth downloading. out everything from calendars to cascading style sheets



Smart Site

Smart Site is a Web site analysis and maintenance tool that visually maps out your site. Its interface is easy to use and displays your site structure and content. You can choose between five views, including hierarchical, concentric and spider. Smart Site can identify broken links and unused pages, validate HTML and correct spelling errors. This is an ideal tool if you're a developer wanting to maintain quality control over a large site.

Price *$189.95 (around £114)*
Platforms *Win 9x/NT*
Download size *6.4Mb*
http://bigpic.com

one, such as the Cambridge Computer Laboratory, and your PC clock will be reset. Run Dimension 4 regularly, and you'll be surprised how much time your clock loses. It uses Network Time

Protocol to get a reading, so if you access the Net through a LAN you'll need special authorisation.

Price *Freeware*
Platforms *Win9x/NT*
Download size *292k*
www.thinkman.com/~thinkman

HeadCase Player

This is an add-on player designed to add a visual element to streaming sound files. It displays a 3D animated head that moves its mouth in time with sound. You can import additional 3D heads or use a photograph of yourself. You could use Headcase with your Internet chat software (see your friend talk), on your Internet phone or radio (put a face to your DJ). Or enhance your site by embedding talking heads within your HTML, using Javahead, the Headcase ActiveX control or Java applet. Bizarre.

Price *Free*
Platforms *Windows 9x/NT*
Download size *1.7Mb*
www.redled.mcmail.com

Xara 3D

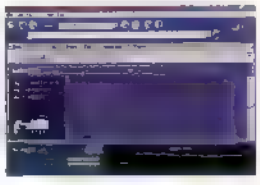
Xara 3D produces quality 3D images you can animate and export to AVI or GIF format. Its slick interface lets you control text, fonts, extrude depth, bevels and light. You drag objects to rotate and position them, while the image updates in real time. This version has transparency, new animation paths, kerning, tracking, and true soft shadows. Still one of the best 3D editors around.

Price *$39 (around £23)*
Platforms *Win9x/NT*
Download size *932k*
www.xara.com/xara3d

WebZip

This handy utility lets you download, store and view Web sites offline. WebZip can download entire Web sites or specific sections or file types. Downloaded files can be saved directly to a folder or within a single Zip file so you can view them in the built-in browser. Convenient.

Price *$39.95 (around £24)*
Platforms *Win9x/NT*
Download size *1.3Mb*
www.spidersoftcom



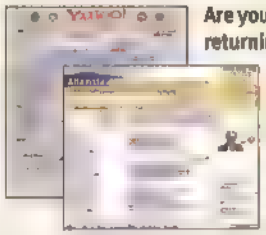
In Tried & Tested

Internet Magazine is committed to bringing you the best and most authoritative reviews in the Internet industry. Every month we test and rate the most important new Internet products. If you're making a buying decision or doing a bit of pre-purchase research, the following pages are not to be missed.

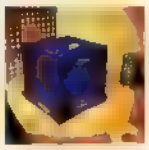
In Tried & Tested you'll find the latest news on newly-announced products, hard-hitting reviews of key product releases and comprehensive Labs tests.

On our Web site at www.internet-magazine.com/reviews you'll find a database of all our reviews from the last year.

Key reviews for May

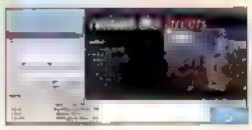


Are your Web searches returning thousands of irrelevant results? This month, Roger Gann and the labs team put six of the best online search engines through their paces. Find out their strong and weak points, and get our top searching tips to boot
See page 78

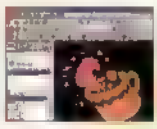


Cobalt's Qube2 is a colourful new version of the popular Intranet/Internet gateway product
See page 87

KeyView Pro 6.5 lets you open all those file formats your computer claims it can't
See page 88



Arachnophilia 3.9 is a free HTML editor with user-configurable options and intelligent tools and functions
See page 88



CoffeeCup 6.2 is a feature-packed and good-value HTML editor for a small number of flashy pages
See page 89

The MultiTech MultiVOIP 200 lets you make phone calls over the Internet with a normal telephone
See page 90

Xara 3D 3 makes it easy to create Web-based 3D text and animations
See page 91

Star Ratings

★★★★★	Must buy
★★★★	Should buy
★★★	Could buy
★★	Poor buy
★	Don't buy

Search and ye shall find

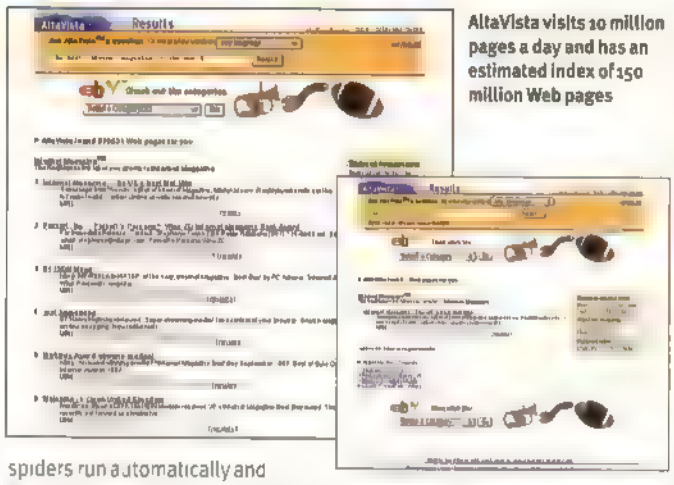
There are millions of Web sites, so finding the one you want can be an awesome task, and ploughing through thousands of search results can be infuriating. Roger Gann and the labs team test the major search engines and show you how to get better results

The abundance of content on the Web is completely unmanageable without a filter to find what you're looking for. We've spent many years using search engines to help us find data and content. These Web sites maintain databases of the content of other Web sites. Most are free and funded by advertising banners, although a few do charge for the service.

Yahoo! was the first search site to gain worldwide attention, and it's still unique because it's catalogued by humans who create a hierarchical directory by subject. But Yahoo! isn't a search engine. It's a directory, and there's a world of difference between the two

Search engines

Search engines consist of three principal components. First is the spider (or crawler), which visits a Web page, reads it, and follows links to other pages within the site. FTP sites and Usenet postings are also commonly spidered. The spider returns to sites on a regular basis to look for changes. AltaVista, for instance, visits around 10 million pages every day. Everything the spider finds goes into the second part of a search engine, the index. If a Web page changes, the index is updated. The fact that the



AltaVista visits 10 million pages a day and has an estimated index of 150 million Web pages

spiders run automatically and index so many Web pages means search engines often find information that isn't listed in directories. Indexing can take time, though, and there's often a time lag between the site being spidered and the results appearing in the index. The final element is the software, which searches the index to see if there are any matches to your keywords.

Indexing the Web is no mean task. Given the immensity of the job, none of the spider-style search facilities can produce a full index of all the resources on the Net. Instead, each of the search engines provides different results based on the areas and depth to which the utility has searched.

Most people assume that search engines index everything. But no search engine can claim to have the perfect record of Web content. AltaVista has the largest number of indexed Web pages, at 150 million, followed by Northern Light (120 million), Excite (55 million) and Lycos (50 million).

It sounds a lot, but even AltaVista only indexes a fraction of the total number of Web pages. According to an April 1998 *Science* magazine study, there were 320 million indexable pages on the Web, so even AltaVista only covers just under half of the Web. Check out Digital's research at **www.research.digital.com/SRC/whatsnew/sem.html**.

This is to be expected – page design, such as frames and image maps, can prevent a site from being properly spidered. And as indices grow exponentially larger, the hardware requirements to service them also rise.

Directories

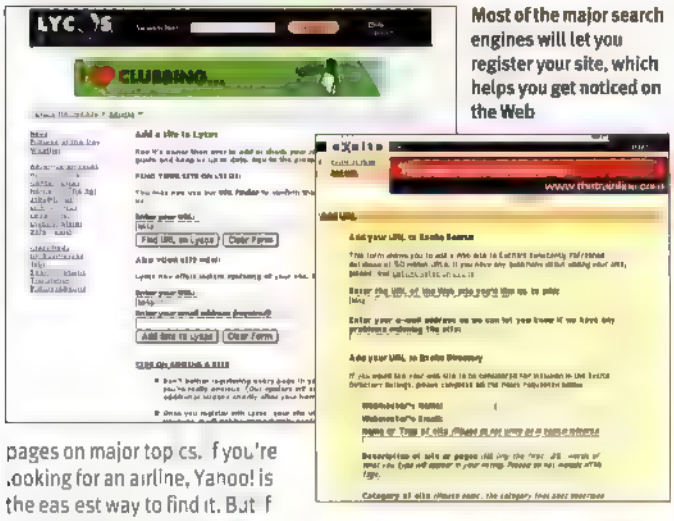
The other method of searching the Web is to use a directory. Yahoo! uses humans to make its listings. The results are shorter, but better – directory quality rather than search engine quantity. You can submit a short description of your site to the directory, or editors write them for sites they review. A search looks for matches in these descriptions.

The human element means the quality of entries is high – do you really care if Joe Soap's home page on GeoCities doesn't make it to the directory? Would you really miss it? Probably not. Some hybrid search engine sites offer the best of both worlds – searching and directories, but Yahoo!'s directory is arguably the best

Directory search sites narrow the focus, so you should use them when you're looking for major

Web-based search resources compared

Engine	URL	Pages indexed (estimated 1/99)	Boolean operators?	Advanced search?	Other search services?	Categories	UK localised?
AltaVista	ww.altavista.com	150 million	✔	✔	People, Usenet, maps	✔	✘
Excite	www.excite.co.uk	60 million	✔	✘	Only at US site	✔	✔
Hotbot	www.hotbot.com	110 million	✔ via form	✔	People, email, Usenet, maps	✔	✘
Lycos	www.lycos.co.uk	50 million	✔	✔	Loot, Thomson Directories	✔	✔
Northern Light	www.northernlight.com	120 million	✔	✔	Periodical collection	✘	✘
Yahoo!	www.yahoo.co.uk	N/A	Limited	✔	Limited	✔	✔



Most of the major search engines will let you register your site, which helps you get noticed on the Web

pages on major topics. If you're looking for an airline, Yahoo! is the easiest way to find it. But if you're searching for a particular phrase or topic that might be spread out all over the Web, you'd be better off using a search engine.

Search engines are funded in two ways. The big ones rely on advertising revenue – they're the most visited Web sites on the Net, so an advert placed here will have access to millions of pairs of eyes. Interestingly, most of the big name search engines have a restrained approach to adverts, and the banner ads tend to be modest affairs that don't dominate the screen.

The smaller ones, such as the fledgling UK index (**www.ukindex.co.uk**), rely on sponsors. Even so, most don't make any money. According to Search Engine Watch, only Yahoo! is making any money – $4 million in the first quarter of '98. Lycos made a small profit, and InfoSeek and Excite both recorded losses. Still, the revenue curves for all the major search engines are pointing healthily skywards.

Testing

I applied three tests to each search engine (see each review for the results, starting on page 81). I began with a search on my own name (which is pretty rare) – gann+roger and roger+gann. I then did an advanced search for modem reviews I had written, but excluding those containing K56flex. Finally, to judge their coverage of UK material, I searched for Tower Bridge AND Thames AND London.

Getting noticed

If people can't find you on the Net, to all intents and purposes, you don't exist. It's therefore vital to get your Web site indexed on all the major search engines. The easy way is to sit back and let the spiders discover it. But you can help yourself by inserting META tags into your HTML code on your home page, plus keywords that categorise what people will find if they visit your site, and a description that sums up the contents. The following is an example of a META tag:

```
<META name="keywords"
content="Internet Magazine,
Martyn Moore, Richard
Baguley, Tanya Kreisky,
Richard Dinnick.">
<META name="description"
content="This is the home of
Internet Magazine, Britain's
most popular Internet
magazine...">
```

META tags are not displayed on the page itself, but they can still be read by the spiders. And most search engines are wise to most of the tricks involving META tags. If they find keyword spamming (the repetition of words like 'sex, sex, sex') on your site, you won't be registered. You'll find plenty of help on using META tags at: **http://searchenginewatch.com/webmasters/meta.html**.

A better way to get noticed is to see if you can register your site with as many search engines as possible – many have a registration page that lets you do this. Search engines such as Infoseek, Excite, Lycos, HotBot and AltaVista will add your pages automatically. Directories, such as Yahoo!, are more selective.

Finally, you can pay a third-party submission service, such as Submit IT (**www.submit-it.com**) or Net Creations (**www.netcreations.com**) to register your site for you.

Last words

The days of relying on a single resource for all your searching needs are long gone. Along with the rapid growth of the Net, search functions have specialised to the point where you need a collection of services to unearth essential information quickly and easily.

Search engines also tend to index different pages, so you have to use more than one search engine for a truly comprehensive search. If you want the ultimate in searching power, you should try a metasearch site, such as MetaCrawler, or an offline metasearch tool, such as Copernic 99.

The search engines will boast about the size of their indexed database, but it's what they do with it that counts, and the quality is far more important. If you're looking for sheer size, AltaVista, Northern Light and HotBot index the largest number of pages. The bigger sites are better for serious research or anything obscure.

But if you're not sure what you're looking for, and you want to browse in a structured way, use a directory service, such as Yahoo! or Lycos. These sites are a good start for general searches or for information about a well-known company or a summary of current events.

Resources

Search Engine Watch
www.searchenginewatch.com
Search Engine Showdown
www.notess.com/search
Web Lens Search Basics
www.rights.org/~pb/col16.html

Other features	Personalisable?
Translation, picture finder	✘
Free email	✔
Free email, audio/video search, chat	✘
Free email, chat, discussion groups	✘
None	✘
Free email	✔

Search synergy

There's only one thing better than using a search engine to find an elusive piece of data or a Web site – use several. Metasearch sites post your enquiry to a multitude of search engines. The problem is you can end up with extremely long lists of results, and some sites offer little in the way of organising the links or in setting up recurring searches.

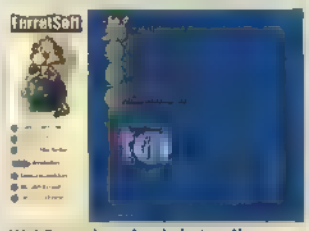
But the conglomerates are often faster than individual sites. Most let you choose the search engines you want to query. And some, like Dogpile, let you set a maximum time you're willing to wait for results.

www.metacrawler.com
www.all4one.com
www.dogpile.com
www.highway61.com
www.debriefing.com
w3.superseek.com/superseek

Then there are offline search tools, which post a single enquiry to multiple search engines and de-dupe and tidy up the results.

The grandaddy of them all is the powerful WebCompass (from **www.quarterdeck.com**), which costs $50 (around £30). It supports 35 search engines and excludes redundant URLs and dead links. It creates a summary for each match and usefully ranks its relevancy to your search criteria. It's also very fast.

My own personal favourite is FerretSoft's WebFerret, because it's so simple. The plain vanilla



WebFerret is a simple but well organised offline search tool

version is a freebie (from **www.ferretsoft.com**), but the more powerful Pro version allows Boolean operators and de-dupeing for $30 (around £18).

The new kid on the block is the excellent and free Copernic 99 (from **www.copernic.com**). This tool hits more than 30 major search engines with your query and rapidly returns accurate results in a handy prioritised list.

What if there were no dot?

Com

No dot for .com?

It'd be like asking, What if there were no petrol for the car? No bulb for the lamp?

Simply put, there'd be no Net. Which is where we come in.

At Sun, our systems and technologies power the Net.

Everything we make and do enables it. So businesses can leverage it. Cash in on it. Whether you're a Fortune 500 company distributing data throughout your global organisation or a tiny start up conducting e-commerce on the Web.

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There's a lot going on behind that little dot.

We think you'd miss it if it weren't there.

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JAVA

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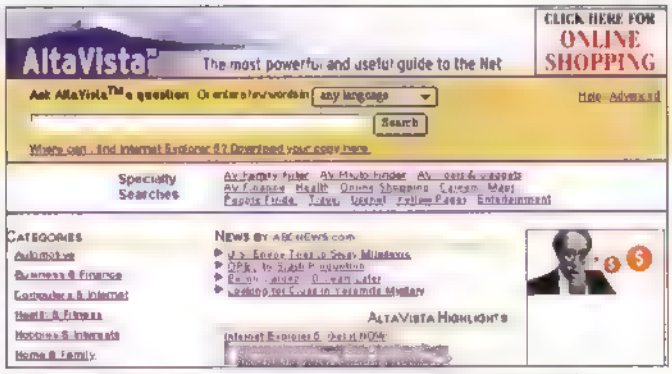
COMPAQ

Alta Vista



The largest and best professional search engine available, even if its Boolean operators tend to let you down

Arguably the most powerful search engine for researchers

AltaVista was created in December 1995 to track email in Digital's research lab. When it was combined with Digital's Alpha processor it promised blazingly fast database performance.

AltaVista was bought by Compaq in 1998 and is the most powerful search engine on the Web. It's undergone some cosmetic improvements, and now includes a Photo Finder to help you search for images on the Web, and a Family Filter to keep your searching safe. The search engine links to Ask Jeeves to answer queries, such as 'Who is the Prime Minister of the UK?' The Babelfish foreign language translator remains, as do an increasing number of categories with cascading menus. You can now search in different languages and specify a date range.

Despite competition, AltaVista remains the largest search engine by sheer number of indexed pages. Its comprehensive coverage and wide range of search commands make it a favourite for researchers, but unattractive for everyday users. Searching has been made easier with several new features, such as Ask AltaVista, courtesy of Ask Jeeves, and directory listings from LookSmart. When you do an ordinary search, AltaVista informs you it 'knows more about' the object of your search.

Last year, AltaVista added zone-specific content, turning it into a Web portal. Zones include entertainment, finance, health and travel. Other services include free email, support for Centraal's RealNames and a helpful gadget and tools collection.

You will also find the graphical refine feature is helpful. From your search results, AltaVista dynamically generates a list of topics you can choose to use, though selecting too many terms can lose relevant hits.

Searching on my name found just three hits, though this rose to 29 when I put my Christian name first. Using just Boolean operators was awkward at first, and unhelpful error messages compounded my misery. The Tower Bridge search produced 1309 hits. This rose dramatically to 1.2m hits when I removed the keywords London and Thames from the search.

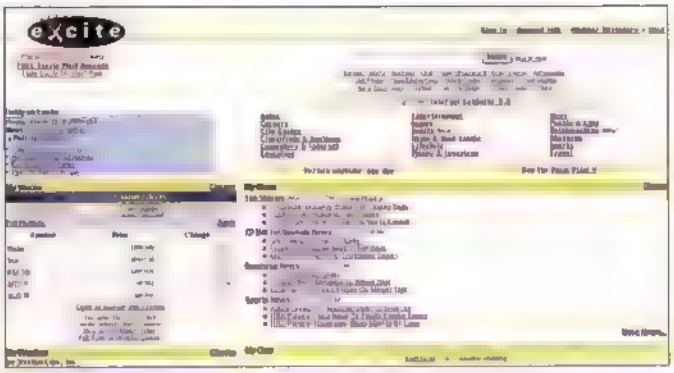
AltaVista will remain a tool for serious researchers. It is fairly inscrutable, and unless you know Boolean logic you really won't get the best out of it – just thousands of hits. This is compounded by its inability to categorise the results by relevancy, though it's possible to weight keywords. In the right hands, its sophisticated search options, including weighted keywords make it a very powerful research tool. Watch out for an AltaVista – customised version of Internet Explorer 5.

★★★★

Alta Vista
Pros *Powerful search tool in the right hands*
Cons *In the wrong hands, its size counts against it – simple searches result in an unfeasibly large number of hits*
Contact *AltaVista*
www.altavista.com

EXCITE

Excite



Excite's wealth of information and easy searching techniques are let down by a lack of more refined search options

Combines the best elements of search engines and directories

Excite was launched in late 1995. It grew quickly, absorbing two of its competitors – Magellan in July 1996 and WebCrawler in November 1996 – though these continue to run as separate services. Excite also drives the search engines behind AOL NetFind and Netscape Search.

Excite offers the best of both worlds – combining a top-notch search engine of around 60 million indexed pages, with good Web site reviews from its editorial staff. It offers a medium-sized index and integrates non-Web material, such as company information and sports scores, into its results, when appropriate. It also offers NewsTracker – one of the best news search services available, and a variety of useful channels including news, yellow and white pages, stock quotes and an airline booking service. A View by Web site option groups results by site, while the More Like This option re-searches Excite's indices to find sites similar to your individual result.

Excite's home page is attractive – once you register, you can customise it, tailor the content, and change the appearance and arrangement to your own taste. Half of the home page is devoted to news and financial information, weather, chat and horoscopes. Free email is also available.

Excite has a UK branch, but most of the content comes straight from the US version. Its people searching facilities are excellent (I never knew there were so many people called Roger Gann!), though this is largely confined to US residents.

Excite has easy searching techniques and some notable features for beginner to intermediate users (such as searching for the keyword and related concepts), but it lacks the searching capabilities of Northern Light or AltaVista and is not as good as Yahoo! at finding specific sites. The More Like This option lets you apply query-by-example fine-tuning, while other options can limit the search to the Web, Usenet or sites reviewed by Excite.

You can also sort by site domain, which makes it easy to skip duplicates, while a relevance-ranking feature lets you identify the best results and which came from the same Web site. In testing, simple searches often returned good results, but the Power Search option offers a significant improvement even though it limits your choice in defining the search terms.

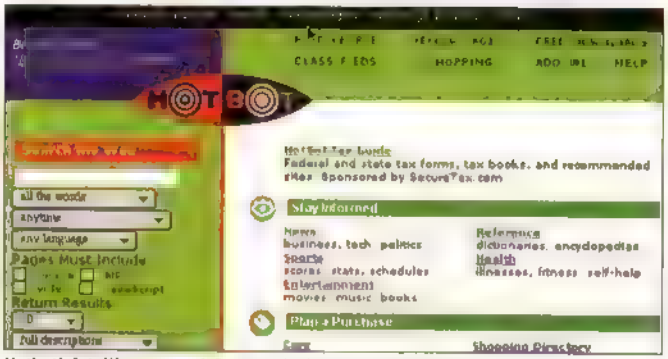
My name search returned almost a quarter of a million hits, but was improved by searching with my Christian name first. The advanced search returned 358 hits, but they were all irrelevant. My search for local content was much better – Excite got over 2400 hits, most of the top hits being relevant.

★★★

Excite
Pros *Combines best elements of search engines and directories*
Easy to use
Cons *Only for serious users and researchers*
Contact *Excite*
Phone *(0171) 447 1800*
www.excite.com

WIRED DIGITAL

Hotbot



Hotbot's intelligent search features include a variety of filters

It's big, it's fast, and it's feature-packed, but Hotbot stops just short of brilliance

HotBot is one of the newer search engines and is now under the wing of Lycos, following its purchase of Wired Digital. HotBot has retained its own identity, though, and is still a major search engine, with an estimated 110 million indexed pages. Like AltaVista, it spiders the Web at a prodigious rate – as many as 10 million Web pages are processed every day.

HotBot has plenty of friendly features including intelligent name searches, which make it easy to search for information on specific people. Its interface is well designed, and the advanced search form makes it easy for a novice to construct precise searches. It doesn't try to be a destination or portal site, but it still offers a raft of extra search options, such as business and people finders via BigYellow and Four11. You can also browse Wireds Cybrarian – a directory which includes categories such as media, reference and technology, and which directs you to high quality sites.

Of all the sites tested, HotBot's choices for indexed searching take some beating – you can search the Web, Usenet, NewsBot, the Classifieds 2000 database, stocks, discussion groups and shareware. Each section lets you pick display and filter options. This database is updated throughout the day and offers a wealth of data from around 200 sites, including the AP and Reuters services and national and international publications.

For Web searches, you can construct complex Boolean queries using a simple pull-down menu. You can also limit searches by date, geographical area and media type, and set the depth of your search. HotBot lets you search for domain names, which can be useful – you type in a company name or part of a URL to get the actual link. The site supports natural-language queries and good quality help is available.

HotBot performs well on simple keyword queries if the terms are fairly specific, but it's less successful on more general keywords. To address this, HotBot recently integrated the Direct Hit Popularity Engine, which supplements your results set with a helpful list of the 10 most visited sites for your query.

HotBot displays results rapidly, with title, relevancy ranking, summary and date. One minor niggle – you can't jump back and forth among your results, as you can in AltaVista and Lycos. On my searching tasks it fared reasonably well – it found just 13 hits for roger+gann, while the search for Tower Bridge produced over 1500 hits, most of which were relevant.

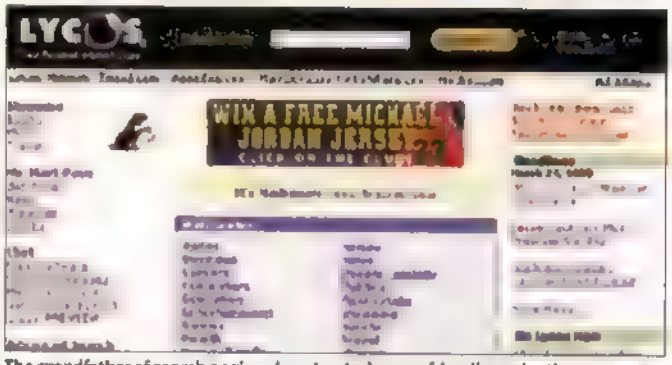
HotBot is ultimately pipped at the post by Northern Light, which can match many of HotBot's advanced search features, but its custom search folders are better at steering you to the results you want.

★★★★

Hotbot
Pros *Impressive destination site that has much to offer. Fast*
Cons *Doesn't handle common or general keywords as well as some rivals.*
Contact *Hotbot*
Phone *001 (415) 276 8400*
www.hotbot.com

LYCOS

Lycos



The grandfather of search engines boasts a truly user-friendly navigation system

The first popular search engine – but can it still get the results?

Developed at Carnegie-Mellon University and originally launched in August 1994, Lycos was the first popular Web search engine. The name comes from the wolf spider family that chases its prey rather than ensnaring them in a web.

Unlike others, Lycos has some unique features. It's available in several European flavours and features local content. It also statistically analyses page content, extracting keywords from each page and including them in the search database.

Lycos is popular despite having a medium-sized index (around 50 million pages). Nevertheless, it does feature an impressive directory of sites called Lycos Community Guides. Sites are automatically listed in these guides using technology from WiseWire, which Lycos bought in early 1998. The Lycos UK and Ireland site was recently revamped to accelerate performance – Web pages are no bigger than 20Kb to ensure responsiveness.

Localisation is moderate. Lycos UK and Ireland rates itself as a UK Top Five Web site, with monthly viewing figures of more than 30. Users can search for UK and Ireland content as well as sites worldwide. But I had no luck when consulting Lycos to see what was on the box for the evening – I got the Lycos equivalent of a 404. There's not much UK content here, just portal-style links to UK sites and there's less than on the US home page. You'll find the usual categories here, plus links to Lycos UK's partners, which include BT, Loot and Thomson Directories. Lycos UK also features the controversial MP3 Search option. As with AltaVista, you can also search for pictures.

Navigating your way around the Lycos site is simple but effective – as you drill down through topics, the path you're taking is tracked at the top of the page, which avoids having to start searches all over again. A range of goodies are available to registered users, such as free email and a customised IE4. Lycos also helps you to link your own web site to its search engine by kindly providing the HTML code.

Two types of search are available on Lycos – Simple and Search Options. The former comprises just a normal dialog box, while the latter takes you to a search form page. Here you fill out a series of dialogs and pull-down lists – essentially giving you the power of Boolean operators. It'll also let you make natural language queries, such as 'What is' questions.

Lycos did reasonably well on simple keyword queries, but hit quality didn't significantly improve with customised queries. My name search found more than 100 sites, but of low relevancy. My Tower Bridge search produced hundreds of hits, the best of which were 'on message'.

★★★

Lycos
Pros *Easy to use, lots of features and facilities with a reasonably local slant.*
Cons *Inaccurate for complex searches*
Contact *Lycos*
Phone *001 (508) 424 0400*
www.lycos.co.uk

You don't want to catch something nasty!

Every day many organisations suffer huge financial losses due to inept security, this enables email or web born viruses to wreak havoc with valuable computer systems. Unfortunately infection is not the only problem faced by an unsuspecting business, they also have to fight against confidential information leaks, both deliberate and accidental, and stamp out the spread of libellous comments via email.

However by implementing content security, you can provide maximum protection from Internet-spread viruses, restrict network traffic to Internet sites deemed inappropriate in their networked environment, as well as ensure that all e-mail messages and their attachments are completely secured from point of origin, to final destination.

Technocom are a backbone ISP who specialise in providing business-to-business connections. By dedicating our network solely to corporate customers we can offer one of the most secure and reliable services available in the UK today. We can provide leased line and routed ISDN connections with 100% guaranteed up-time and unrivalled service and support 24 hours a day 7days a week. With our failsafe network topology you can be rest assured that your valuable information reaches its destination via the quickest, most secure route

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Microsoft

NORTHERN LIGHT LLC

Northern Light

Northern Lights deserves particular praise for the way its results are presented

BEST BUY

Fast, accurate, simple to use and with quality hits a-plenty

After a somewhat faltering start in September 1995, Northern Light is now No 2 in the search engine stakes, with some 120 million indexed pages logged. Unique among the search engines in this Labs test, Northern Light is both an Internet search engine and a fee-based database service. Its advanced search features – combined with the innovative way it organises results into folders and the availability of its fee-based content – make it a strong contender for your loyalty.

Unlike other search sites, there's no white pages or other search facilities, though there's a news search facility (across 33 services) and a smattering of financial information. There's a definite feeling that Northern Light is aimed at the financial or business user.

Northern Light provides two levels of search: Simple and Power searches. Either way, you get support for Boolean syntax, nested queries, wild cards and truncation. The Power Search page offers you additional refinements, such as field searching and the ability to limit a search by date, language or domain. There's an impressive sort feature, which simplifies things considerably if your search returns an ocean of hits. It dynamically groups hits into custom folders based on subject, document type, source and language.

The Special Collection also sets it apart. This fee-based database offers the full text of more than 4500 periodicals, learned journals and news wires, which you can search alone or in conjunction with the Web. These tend to be specialist titles, though there's some worthwhile material in there. Northern Light claims to offer 1800 sources in this collection, though most aren't publicly available on the Web. After reading a Special Collection article, you can purchase the full text for between $1 and $4. Northern Light can search these articles along with the Web, and integrate the results or choose to search the Special Collection and Web separately. The Special Collection was relatively weak when news searching.

In general, Northern Light is highly accurate on most searches. In addition, with Custom Search Folders you can narrow thousands of hits down to the few you really want. Northern Lights was also one of the best at weeding out duplicate links and multiple, similar links from a single site.

It produced over 2700 hits when searching for my name, but only the hits at the top were relevant. The modem review search was better than any of other search engine, but this was partly due to using the Special Collection. The search for Tower Bridge generated over 3400 highly relevant hits, but sorting the results into folders made this easy.

★★★★★

Northern Light
Pros *Fast and accurate searching for both expert and novice alike. Watch out AltaVista*
Cons *No frills to make you camp on this site*
Contact *Northern Light*
Phone *001 (617) 577 4900*
www.northernlight.com

YAHOO!

Yahoo!

Well, it is the world's favourite search engine for a reason...

BEST BUY

Yahoo! brings order to the enormity of the Web and gets you results

Quality not quantity could be the mission statement of Yahoo!, the most popular directory database on the Net. When you search Yahoo!, you're searching carefully selected and categorised sites. With a collection of more than one million handpicked sites classified into more than 25,000 categories, Yahoo! makes an excellent starting point for both browsing and searching. It began as an information classification system in late 1994, and now gets more than 400,000 queries a day. As popularity increased, a word by word search engine from Open Text was added. It's now the most frequently linked site on the Net.

Its content and organisation rather than its search tools are its finest features. You should be able to find what you're looking for without resorting to Boolean operators, though it's not easy to fine-tune your search. You can either search for your keywords or progressively descend through the 14 main category lists until you arrive at a suitably narrow list. Your path is progressively listed at the top of the page, making it easy to backtrack from a dead end.

Yahoo! uses around 80 people to select sites for inclusion which ensures high quality returns and relevancy. Each page has a 'suggest a site' link for recommending sites for consideration. Inktomi matches also automatically appear after all the Yahoo! results.

It's not that good at searches such as text strings – comprehensive Web indexes such as Northern Light or AltaVista are better for this. In fact, if your search isn't fruitful, a page link to AltaVista lets you continue your searching with the more powerful search engine. This is useful, as I was looking at areas outside Yahoo!'s search remit. The name search produced 555 irrelevant hits, the modem search pointed to four K56flex sites, while the Tower Bridge search produced a trio of identical hits pointing to a marina in St Katherine's Dock. Searching outside the categories increased the number of hits from 292, many of these being pertinent.

Yahoo! offers a diverse menu of tools and services. Once you've registered, you can tailor a news-page to your interests or download a customised news ticker that runs in your Windows 9x taskbar. Free email is on offer, along with chat room facilities. Its search options include UseNet, courtesy of a link to DejaNews, and white pages services such as Four11 to locate email addresses.

Visit **www.yahoo.co.uk** rather than .com to visit Yahoo! UK and Ireland. Some of the category titles could do with localising though, such as changing mass transit to public transport and subways to underground.

★★★★★

Yahoo!
Pros *Yahoo! imposes order with its high quality categorisation*
Cons *Text searching capabilities are limited so they won't appeal to researchers*
Contact *Yahoo!*
Phone *001 (408) 731 3300*
www.yahoo.co.uk

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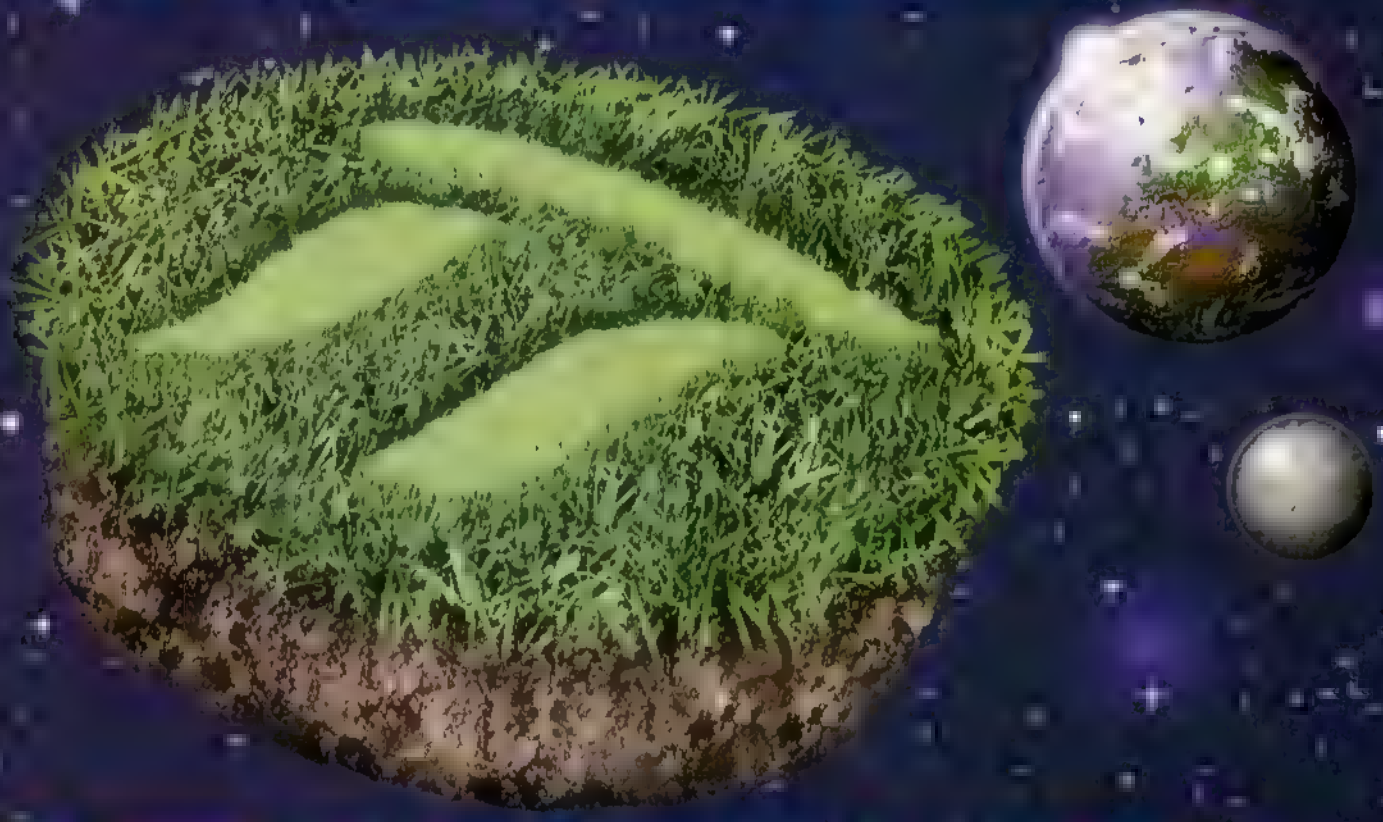

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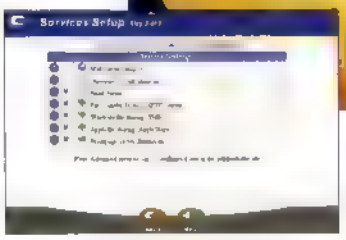
Top products for May

This month's products make your life easier. Sort out your intranet/Internet networking, open difficult file formats, create 3D text and animations, and choose from two bargain HTML editors

INTRANET/INTERNET GATEWAY

Cobalt Qube 2

An attractively designed gateway device for small networks



The Qube 2 might seem like just a Unix box in disguise, but its interface makes it much easier to manage

BEST BUY

There are all kinds of all-in-one intranet, mail server and Internet gateway devices on the market, but it's hard to differentiate between them. Cobalt has made the Qube 2 look different from anything else you've seen – the device is a desktop six-inch cube with a semi-opaque purple plastic case. If nothing else, it looks the part.

The unit provides all the services you'll need to handle Internet and internal networking for a small or medium-sized network. The obvious omissions are Web and discussion group servers (which are turned on by default).

There are extra services you can enable, such as FrontPage extensions (so you can update your Web content through FrontPage's built-in upload features). There's also an email server – an SMTP mail server in the shape of the standard Unix-based Sendmail package, plus QPOP for POP client services and the ProFTP file transfer server.

And this is just the beginning. There are also plenty of LAN-oriented services. A DHCP server provides address management, an SNMP (Simple Network Management Protocol) agent gives you management information and SMB (Server Message Block) support is provided so you can use Windows 95/WfWG file sharing to drop files on the box. AppleShare is included so Mac users can do the same.

There's also a domain name server, and backups (which are often neglected) are provided by Legato's Networker package. If you've turned on the mail facilities, you can also do mailing lists. If you haven't already guessed, this system is really a Unix machine in disguise. But this is nothing to worry about because you don't have to get your hands dirty with Unix command line input.

The unit has a pair of Ethernet ports for network connectivity. When you first turn on the device, it tries to find an address for its Ethernet card via DHCP. If it fails, it tells you – using the LCD display on the back panel – that it needs an IP address. You can configure an address using the buttons on the back of the unit, and once it has a network identity, you can manage the Qube using any Web browser.

When you first connect to the device from your browser, it takes you through configuring the various aspects of the box. This involves turning on the service you need, defining the domain name of the unit, and setting an administrator password. Once you've made the basic settings, the unit alters the default home page to make it more user-related, moving the administration page to one side.

You can change the general access pages using the various file upload mechanisms (AppleShare, FrontPage or Windows sharing), with access permissions defined from the administrator's screen for the various areas of the file structure. You can let people create other accounts if you wish, but I'd recommend keeping access restricted to the administrator.

If you're using the device as an Internet server and an intranet system, you can use either the secondary Ethernet port, or a modem attached to the serial port, as the WAN side of the box. Use the Ethernet port if you want to connect the device to a router, or use the modem if you want to use dial-up Internet access.

The machine is intelligent enough to tell whether the secondary network port is being used, and it won't let you configure anything that isn't connected. The modem setup functions ask you for initialisation strings, which means they're generic, so you can use almost any modem if you know its initialisation string.

The maintenance side of the unit (firmware upgrades and backups) is handled using an option in the Web general user interface. As with all of the admin functions, maintenance is handled using basic HTML forms, and you can choose between full and basic backups.

Software upgrades use the RedHat concept of packages – all files relating to a package are bundled into a single package, which the system then unpacks after the upload.

The Qube is a cool little product. The purple casing is awesome, as is the particularly exciting green light that appears when you turn it on.

To be honest, you could do everything this unit does by using a basic Linux machine with PD software, such as SAMBA and Sendmail. But the management interface of the Qube makes it easier to manage than a Unix box full of assorted free software.

David Charles

★★★★★

Cobalt Qube 2

Price *£1,075 to £1,498 inc VAT (price depends on size of your hard disk)*
Pros *Excellent management interface and configuration through LCD display and control panel*
Cons *You could do it yourself for less money with a Linux box*
Contact *Cobalt*
Phone *(01235) 772 375*
www.cobaltnet.com

FILE VIEWING UTILITY

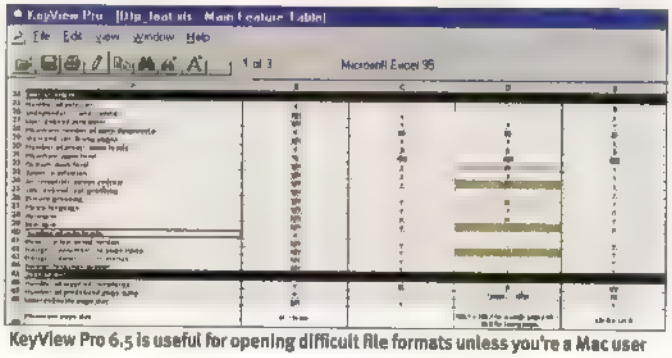
KeyView Pro 6.5

A utility to open all those file formats your computer says you can't

You must have come across files on the Internet, or been sent files by friends or colleagues, that you can't open because your computer says you don't have the right application.

KeyView Pro 6.5 is a versatile file viewing utility that aims to eliminate this problem. It lets you open, view and print more than 200 different file formats. These include most word processor, spreadsheet and graphics formats, as well as an assortment of multimedia file formats, such as QuickTime movies and AU and AIFF sound files. It also lets you decompress Zip archives, UU and MIME-encoded email attachments, and files compressed using the Mac-based BinHex compression format.

The program is aimed mostly at corporate users, but you can install it directly onto your hard disk or on a server where it can be used by multiple users. KeyView Pro 6.5 is sold with a single-user licence, though, so you'll need to purchase additional licences if you intend to share it with colleagues.



KeyView Pro 6.5 is useful for opening difficult file formats unless you're a Mac user

There are plenty of file viewing and conversion utilities available free on the Internet. But KeyView Pro 6.5 does have some additional features that aren't available in the various freeware programs most people use.

You can use it with Explorer and Navigator, so you can view all sorts of file formats in these browsers. This'll be useful for corporate users who want to put existing word processor, spreadsheet or presentation documents onto an intranet without having to convert them all into HTML.

You can also use KeyView Pro 6.5 within the Eudora and Outlook Express email programs, as well as the Lotus Notes groupware program. When you install KeyView, you specify which programs you want to use with it, and a KeyView option is automatically added to the menus or toolbars of these programs. This means you can instantly view any files emailed to you, without having to leave the email program to open up a separate viewer utility.

The program is somewhat limited, though. One of the first files I tried to open was a PageMaker document, but KeyView doesn't work with PageMaker files or other DTP file formats. This is a glaring omission as DTP programs, such as PageMaker, Microsoft Publisher and FrameMaker, are popular in the corporate environment. This undermines KeyView's claim to be 'a comprehensive enterprise information viewing solution'.

We also had trouble getting KeyView to work with QuickTime movies taken from a Mac, even though the program claims to support QuickTime.

KeyView Pro 6.5 is a useful utility and will appeal to corporate intranets. Everyone else can find similar utilities on the Net for free.

Cliff Joseph

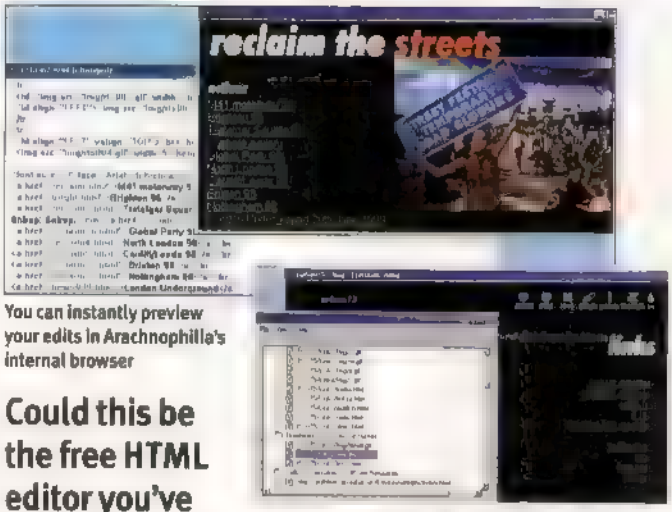
★★★

KeyView Pro 6.5

Price *£39+VAT*
Pros *Useful file viewing options*
Cons *Omits some popular file formats*
Contact *Viatec Software*
Phone *(01276) 684 506*
www.verity.com

HTML EDITOR

Arachnophilia 3.9



You can instantly preview your edits in Arachnophilia's internal browser

Could this be the free HTML editor you've been looking for?

If you're a budding Web designer with a budget tighter than a duck's arse, HTML editors don't come much cheaper than Arachnophilia. The author has declared the product 'careware', which means it's yours for free, as long as you "stop whining for a day and say encouraging words to young people and make them feel welcome on the planet Earth".

This oddity doesn't stop Arachnophilia from being a solid and capable HTML editing package, and it's suitable for experienced and novice users alike. Behind the slightly clunky interface, there's a mass of useful and time-saving features, and its code-centric approach is reminiscent of the popular Homesite editor.

You edit your code directly into the main program window, and there's a mass of user-definable keyboard macros, tags and shortcuts to speed up your work. On-the-fly tag colour coding (which supports CGI, Perl, C, C++, Java and JavaScript) makes authoring easier, along with the curiously named 'Beautify HTML' feature. This tidies up your sloppy coding, checks for syntax errors, and automatically and intelligently indents your work – this can be a great help if you're working on complex pages.

The useful site analyser feature examines your site and produces a site tree, which graphically displays the directory structure and highlights any orphan files and broken links. Multiple browsers are supported (up to six), which means you can quickly check your work for compatibility, while an instant view feature means you can preview your edits in the internal browser, though this starts to grind to a halt on heavier pages.

The site analyser displays the site structure and checks for dodgy links

Frames are supported, but there's no wizard to guide new users, and support for cascading style sheets and DHTML is non-existent. Arachnophilia does let you configure your own tags, though, so you can add specialised tags if you know what you're doing.

If you're in a real hurry, you can instantly convert .rtf files into reasonably accurate HTML pages – simply drag and drop them from Windows Explorer into Arachnophilia. For uploading your work, there's a built-in FTP client, which can be configured to automatically upload changed files.

Arachnophilia isn't perfect, but it's a powerful HTML editor that puts many commercial offerings to shame. With a host of user-configurable options, and intelligent tools and functions, it should prove more than satisfactory for many designers. And since it's free, you can't lose, even if you don't like it.

Mike Slocombe

★★★★

Arachnophilia 3.9

Price *A little bit of love*
Pros *Multiple browser support, customisable. Non-capitalist philosophy, free*
Cons *At this price, none, but CSS support would have been nice*
www.arachnoid.com

HTML EDITOR

CoffeeCup HTML Editor++ 6.2

A good value HTML editor with some great extras, but no WYSIWYG

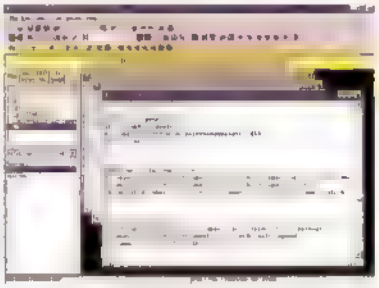
For just $49 (around £29), this new version of CoffeeCup offers a hell of a lot. Included in the package are 175 animated GIFs, 30 background images, 140 Web graphics, 50 JavaScript scripts, 12 DHTML animations, heaps of ActiveX components, and even a touch of Perl. But if all these extras don't impress you, there's plenty to smile about in the main program.

If you need a little help with adding page elements, there are wizards for tables, colours, frames and forms. All kinds of fancy inserts can be added, including WebTV tags and sounds. There's also a full-blown drag and drop FTP client for mounting the finished item on a server – a standard feature on more expensive HTML editors, but usually missing at this price range.

One CoffeCup's best features is the Image Companion. Open up an image, and you can rotate it, view animations, change colour resolution, and save it in a different Web-compatible format. Impressive, but not about to muscle out Paint Shop Pro or Photoshop. You'll still need to run a regular image manipulation program if you want to do anything serious, like resizing.

Adding JavaScript and DHTML to your pages is straightforward, but to get the scripts running you'll have to go into the code and make manual changes to the links and text. If you introduce more than one of these dynamic elements to a page, life gets more complicated.

You might have to solve a few conflicts before everything works properly, but there's good help provided. Under the more detailed sections – some of them Web-based – you'll start to pick up the composite nature of the software package. Help with cascading style sheets comes from the Web Design Group, and information on WebTV comes from the WebTV Network.



CoffeeCup 6.2 is great for small projects filled with complex pages

Open up the credits and the program's multiple sources become even clearer. The CGI scripts are from Matt's Script Archive, the animated GIFs and backgrounds are from DesignHaus, and the buttons are from AndyArt.

The combination works well. But the problem with CoffeeCup is that it's only a text editor. There's no WYSIWYG viewer, so to preview a page you're forced to use the Test in a Browser menu option. This is a bit of a pain if you're a trial and error merchant, especially one with high standards.

In the long run, if you want to build a lot of pages, it might be worth paying more for something better. But if you want to make a small number of flashy pages with animations on tap, and you don't want to spend a lot of money, this could be exactly your cup of... tea.

Andrew Starling

★★★

CoffeeCup HTML Editor++ 6.2

Price *$49 (around £29)*
Pros *Lots of features and free bits*
Cons *No WYSIWYG*
Contact *CoffeeCup Software*
Phone *(001361) 887 7778*
www.coffeecup.com

"Host my company's Web site with Total Web Solutions? Why would I want to take advantage of all their fully redundant network infrastructure? Why should I care that it's based at MaNAP, the UK's 2nd Internet peering point? Why would I want to leverage Total Web's Sun SPARC or Compaq Proliant servers to power my Web Site? Sacre bleu! I haven't time for all this. Josephine's waiting!"

For most people, Total Web Solutions is pure commonsense. Shouldn't you be finding out about services that range from Web Hosting to Domain name Registration, from E-mail facilities to Microsoft Frontpage, from Secure Servers to ODBC and ASP, from Real Audio and Video to free technical support? Or have you got an appointment at Waterloo?

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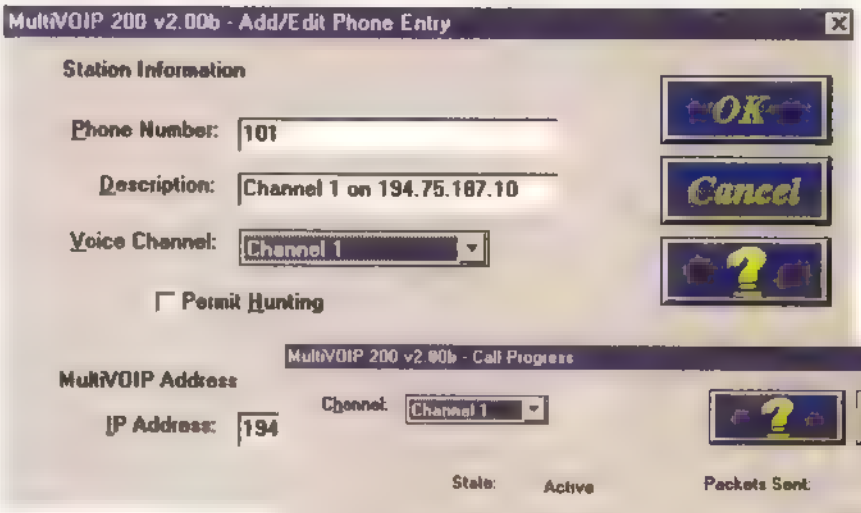

This device is extremely easy to configure and child's play to manage. It only took us 10 minutes to have everything running over an Ethernet LAN in the lab

The traditional way to send both data and voice traffic over a wide area network (WAN) is to multiplex it. You put a device at each end, which takes voice and data, electronically packages everything into a single bitstream and unwraps it into separate voice and data signals at the other end.

The modern method is to take the voice signal and wrap it up as TCP/IP packets. You only need a voiceover IP (VOIP) box at each end, instead of expensive multiplexes working at the physical level.

The MultiVOIP box from MultiTech is easy to set up. You connect the Ethernet connector to the local area network (LAN), plug your phones or fax machines into the analogue phone ports, plug in the serial cable, and run the configuration program.

This is a Windows-based package that communicates via the network or the serial port. It interrogates the device and presents the parameters in a simple Windows format.

The first thing you need to do is set the IP address of each box – you give it an address, a subnet mask and a default route, and then set up the phone numbers for the ports.

The number directory works on a master, slave basis. You configure one unit as the master and give it the number configuration. Any unit configured as a slave is told the address of the master, and it pulls down the directory information at an interval which you can specify. A number setting is an association between a phone number, a device and a port. In our setup, the phone number 101 was given to channel one of the device, with the address 194.75.187.10. The phone number 112 was allocated to channel two of the device at 194.75.187.11. A few advanced facilities, such as hunt groups, are provided, but this device will never give you the features of a PBX with a five-figure price tag.

For a basic setup, this is all you have to do – it took us about 10 minutes to get everything running over an Ethernet LAN in the lab. There are various configuration options associated with the electronic aspects of the analog ports, but these are all covered in the documentation (PDF files on disk rather than printed manuals), and the default settings worked fine in our testing.

One nice aspect is the configuration system, which includes international settings – so you can tell systems whether you want the default American ring pattern or the UK setting.

On the downside, the system is definitely an end-to-end voice package – its purpose is to get voice traffic from a telephone or fax at one end of the WAN to another telephone or fax at the other end. It doesn't support H.323 (an Internet standard for compressing speech), so you can't use it with networked packages such as NetMeeting. But you can use it as a remote terminal to a PBX by connecting the ports on the MultiVOIP into analog outlets on the phone switch.

In our LAN-based test, we got acceptable voice quality with a bearable delay (approx 0.1-0.2 seconds). But where WANs are concerned, a potential buyer will need to look carefully at the latencies of the links.

As with all voiceover IP devices, this unit is more suited to private WANs than the Internet – you can never guarantee the Net will work between your end points, and even if it's working, you can't guarantee it'll be steady enough to support voice traffic.

Overall, MultiTech's MultiVOIP is an excellent entry-level, end-to-end voiceover IP device. It's extremely easy to configure, and child's play to manage.

David Charles

★★★★

Other alternatives

Although the Multitech MultiVOIP is a fairly unique device, there is no shortage of other devices for making phone calls over the Internet. There's the Aplio/Phone (£195, reviewed in December 1998, awarded four stars) which plugs into a normal telephone line and routes calls over the Internet – get more details from www.aplio.com.

There are also plenty of other systems for companies or large networks. Pay a visit to www.pulver.com/gateway for a good list.

The MultiTech MultiVOIP200 is the modern way of sending data and voice traffic over a wide area network

MultiTech MultiVOIP200

Price *£1,199 for device with two voice/fax ports*
Pros *GUI-based configuration program eliminates the need to fight with ASCII-based front ends. Phonebook managed via a master/slave mechanism*
Cons *Doesn't integrate with packages such as NetMeeting*
Contact *MultiTech*
Phone *(0118) 959 7774*
www.multitech.com

Xara 3D 3

Left: 3D objects can be imported and rendered with extrusion and lighting effects

Below: Inspiring 3D graphics can be created in a flash, with control over the background and shadows

Create impressive Web-based 3D text and animations the quick and easy way

The latest version of Xara 3D makes it easy to produce impressive 3D headers and animated logos. Xara 3D 3 is aimed at Web authors and weighs a waif-like 2Mb. But it hasn't skimped on the essentials.

The CD has plenty of textures, some average fonts and a mass of samples and 2D shapes. New features include true soft shadows, variable transparency, and enhanced typographic control over individual characters and lines of text. You can import 2D objects from Windows metafiles and Xara will extrude them into 3D objects.

The interface is simplicity itself – even beginners will be producing fully rendered logos in minutes. The 3D screen redraw is blindingly fast, so you won't be twiddling your thumbs waiting for your results to appear. Type your text directly onscreen or into an editing box, and preview the result using real-time anti-aliasing. One big improvement is that you can now apply kerning, baseline shift and line spacing to characters, which remain fully editable after rendering.

An extrusion dialog box lets you convert text to outlines with adjustable outline width. You can add extrusion effects and choose either glossy or matt textures. You can also experiment with the 800 textures available on the CD, or import Xara's own textures and backgrounds, with control over the tiling and texture size. A further range of options lets you apply a host of different beveling effects, which you can preview instantly. Lighting effects are taken care of with up to three light sources, and you can add shadows with variable transparency and blur.

The comprehensive animation options are accessed via a dialog box that offers six different types of movement, including new swing and pulse modes. There's also a multitude of animation modes – you can set the rotation speed, frame rate, and the axis and angle control.

Static images can be exported in JPEG, PNG, BMP and GIF formats, with options to optimise output for the Web using a Web-safe palette. Animations are saved in Xara's proprietary .x3D format, or exported as an animated GIF – you're given control over the colour depth, transparency and dithering.

Xara's failure to include any file size information or clues to possible download times could prove to be its downfall for some designers.

Niggling faults aside, Xara 3D 3 is an excellent product that simplifies the creation of Web-based 3D text and animations.

Mike Slocombe

★★★★

Xara 3D

Price *£28.20*
Pros *Cheap, simple to use, fast*
Cons *Limited options, no file size previews*
Contact *Xara*
Phone *(01442) 350 000*
www.xara.com

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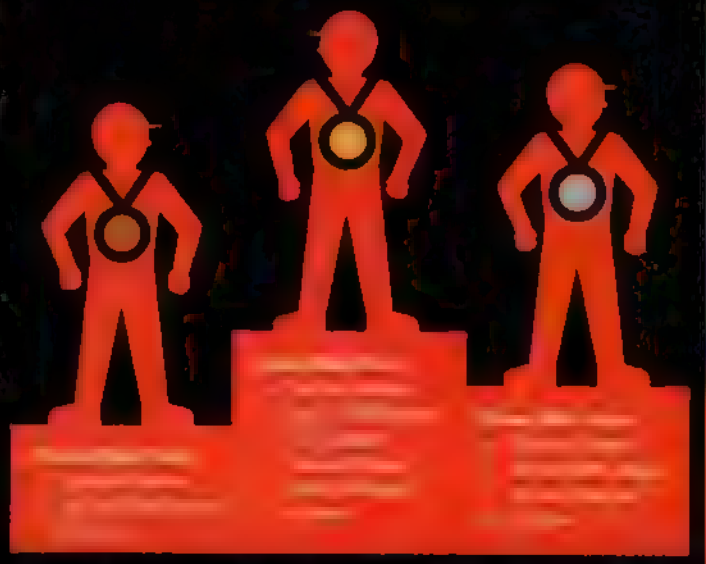

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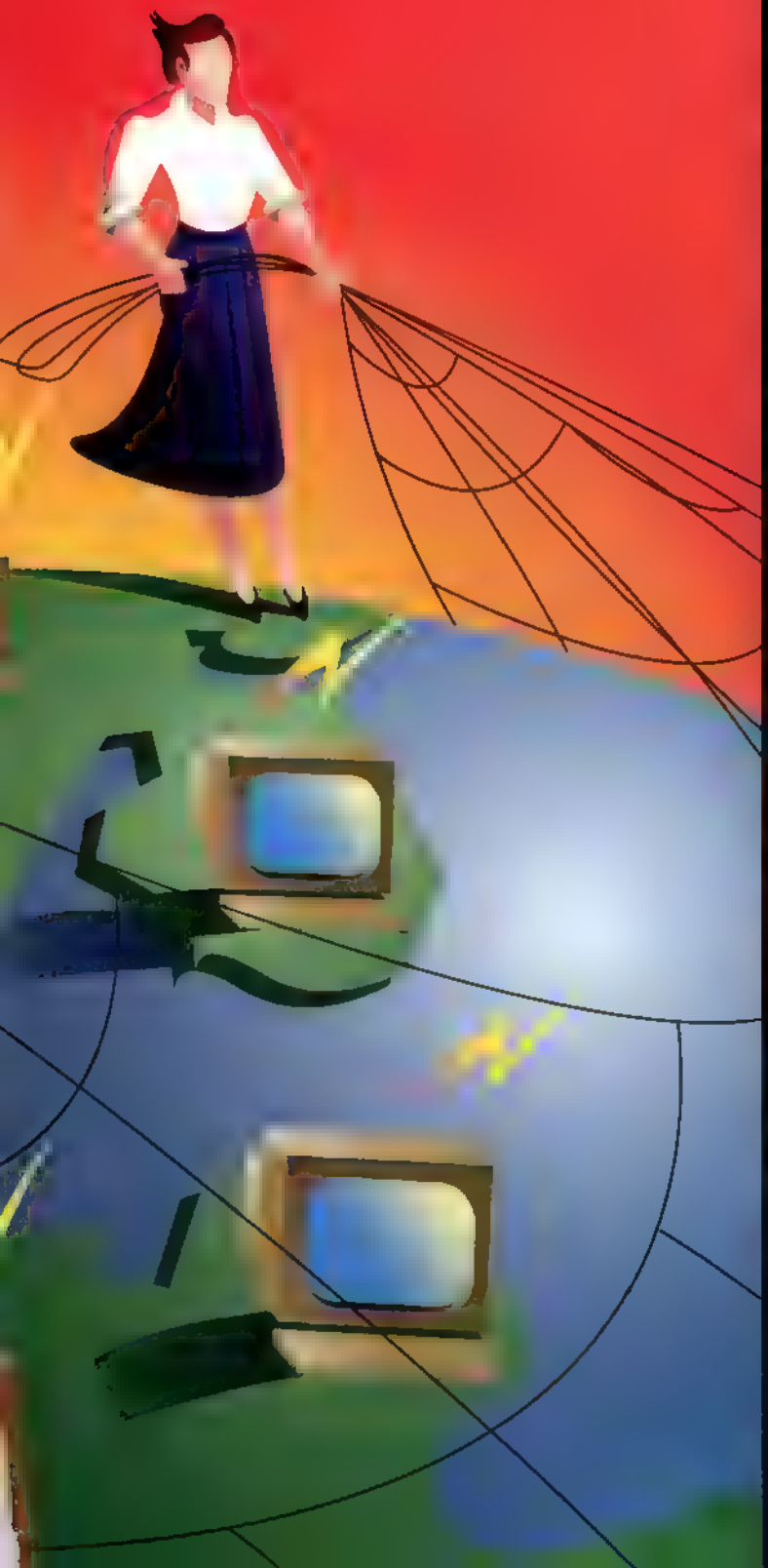
Earl's Court Two, 25-27 May 1999



UK SPRING

Internet World 99

If you're in the Internet business, Earl's Court Two is the place to be on 25, 26 and 27 May.

Internet World is the definitive series of Internet business events and it comes to London this spring to showcase the best of the Internet industry.

Internet Magazine will be there, sponsoring the New Technology seminar and copies of the magazine will be on sale from the *Internet Magazine* stand.

Last year more than 12,000 people visited Internet World to see the latest technology and business solutions in action. The show is broad enough to show how all the technologies fit together and presents each in sufficient depth to show how it all works.

This year is the sixth annual UK event and there will be more than 300 exhibitors. Visitors in 1999 will see much more focus on how to deploy Internet technology for competitive advantage. The use of business applications and proven successful Internet strategies will form a significant part of the many conferences and seminars.

The Online Consumer Conference, spanning all three days, will feature high profile speakers in the areas of online advertising, retail and consumers online.

List of exhibitors

Among the exhibitors at this year's exhibition are:

Allied Dunbar
Compaq computers
Globix
Intel
INTERshop
IPIX
Macromedia
NetNames
Network Solutions
Symantec
Zip2.com
ZY.com

Ticket information

Entry to the show is free and you can order your tickets and obtain seminar information by calling the Internet World hotline

01203 426497

For more information, go now to the Show Web site

www.internetworld.co.uk

Expert help

If you've got a Net problem, email it to us and we'll field it to our distinguished panel of experts. From Web design to legal advice (and let's face it, that would normally cost a fortune), we can answer your questions. We'll also be picking the best reader's tip each month, so get them rolling in – the best one wins a £200 online shopping spree

Readers' questions are answered by our panel of experts. Send your query to faq@internet.emap.com

Richard Baguley is our deputy editor. He'll be answering your technical questions on everything from relational databases to digital signatures.

Mike Slocombe has designed sites for clients that include Snickers, Zenith Films, Direct Connection, NCR and Evolution. He also produces Urban 75, an irreverent online magazine. Mike will be answering all your Web design queries.

Roger Gann is a freelance computer journalist. He specialises in connection issues. If you're having trouble with dial-up networking or want to know why your 56K modem just isn't talking to your ISP, he's your man.

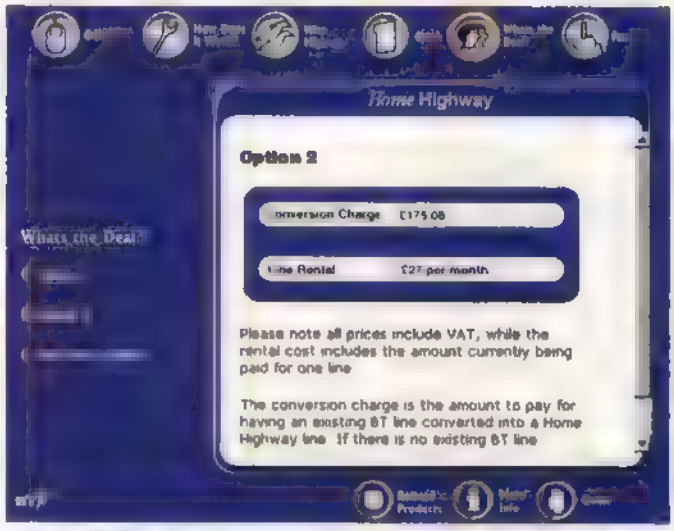
Michael Chissick is the head of Internet and IT law at Field Fisher Waterhouse, a city of London law firm with 50 partners. He'll be ruling on your legal problems.

We regret that we cannot answer any queries other than those printed in the magazine.

Is ISDN the way to go?

Q Is it faster to use ISDN than a regular BT line? I'm using the Internet for around five hours a day for business. Are there any disadvantages in installing ISDN?
Robert Weibold
rwelbold@hotmail.com

Richard Baguley replies: ISDN has some definite advantages over a normal modem – it's slightly faster (you'll get a 64k or 128k connection instead of the 40-50k offered by the best modem) and is quicker to connect (usually less than a second, while a normal modem takes up to a minute). It is more expensive and you'll need to buy an ISDN Terminal Adapter (the equivalent of a modem). There are lots of different models available, but you can get one for as little as £50. If you're using the Internet a lot and need to connect quickly and easily, I'd probably recommend it. At five hours a day though, you're getting close to the point where you might be better off with a permanent connection to the Internet through a leased line.



Getting an ISDN line certainly costs more than a modem. So, is it worth it?

Communicator meets MSN

Q I connect to the Internet using MSN and my default browser and email programs are Outlook Express and IE4. I can use Netscape Communicator to browse the Web, but not to check my mail. According to the MSN helpline, this is because MSN uses a particular method for sending and receiving email. The support person claimed this was not exclusive to Microsoft products and that there were no third party programs capable of checking its mail. It sounds like Microsoft's 'use our programs or we'll make sure you can't use anyone else's' line. How can I check my mail with Communicator?
Martin Conaghan
mconaghan@msn.com

Roger Gann replies: Once upon a time, MSN used a proprietary mail protocol and the only mail client you could use with it was the rather clunky Microsoft Exchange, aka Window's Messaging. But times change and it now uses the *de facto* POP3/SMTP mail protocols. Outlook Express is a universal email client capable of accessing any POP3, SMTP mail server. That's the good news. The bad news is that MSN uses Secure Password Authentication when you log on. That's why the MSN login dialog appears whenever you connect. All Microsoft mail clients support this proprietary standard, but I don't know any other mail client that does. Sorry, but I don't think you can use Communicator to collect your MSN mail.

Opening a new Web window

Q I'm setting up a Web site for my wife, who's a special needs teacher, to use with her pupils. It'll provide interactive worksheets and link to other sites

Think about the nature of your business and the money you're prepared to pay for your Web site before committing yourself to a domain name

which will, hopefully, be interesting and useful for the children. To avoid total confusion (and to stop the kids wandering off to other sites), we'd like to set some of the HTML links to open new windows on top of the original home page window. How can I do this?
Mark Thompson
Mark.THOMPSON@sb.com

Mike Slocombe replies: This can be achieved by applying the following code to all the links from the main home page:

```
<a href= "http://www.blah
.com/newpage.html" target=
" blank">click here for new
page</a>
```

This forces the linked page to open in a new browser window on top of the original window, which remains open underneath. Bear in mind that opening multiple browser windows can affect performance (depending on your machine) and that opening a new window will only work with frame-capable browsers.

How much for your name?

Q Following your domain name advice to Andrew Saggers (March issue, page 94), what is the value of a domain name like .com, .net, .org and .co.uk? From a marketing point of view, is it better to register .com rather than .net?
Graeme Reddish
reddish@itl.net

Richard Baguley replies: Many companies get around this problem by registering the same name in many different top-level domains, so BT has BT.com, BT.co.uk and even (following a court case last year) BT.org. If you're planning to do business internationally, you should go for.com, but if you're only doing business nationally, you might want to show you're a UK business by going for a .co.uk domain. The .net domain is used by organisations that administer or provide network connection services. It really depends on the nature of your business, and whether you're prepared to pay extra to register several domains.

More menus

Q I'm designing a professional site for my dad's insurance business. There's a lot of content to go into the site, so I'd really like to have a pull-down menu in one frame which brings up the pages in the other frame. I've seen a good example on the Millenium Dome site, but how do I do this?
Neil Jordan
neilj@globalnet.co.uk

Richard Baguley replies: We covered this sort of thing in last month's Expert Help (see *Open the round window*, page 97). There are plenty of places that will help you build your menu system. Builder.com has an automatic menu-maker program in its Coo. Tools (at **http://builder.cnet.com/Programming/Kahn**), which will automatically generate the JavaScript code for you. There's a great collection of all sorts of Java menu applets available at **www.freewarejava.com/applets/menus.shtml**. Most of them are free (or extremely cheap) and come with Java source code. The Java applets from FreewareJava.com need a Java browser to work, but most are only a

Top question wins a pager and Mini-Mail service

Poor ping gets me fragged

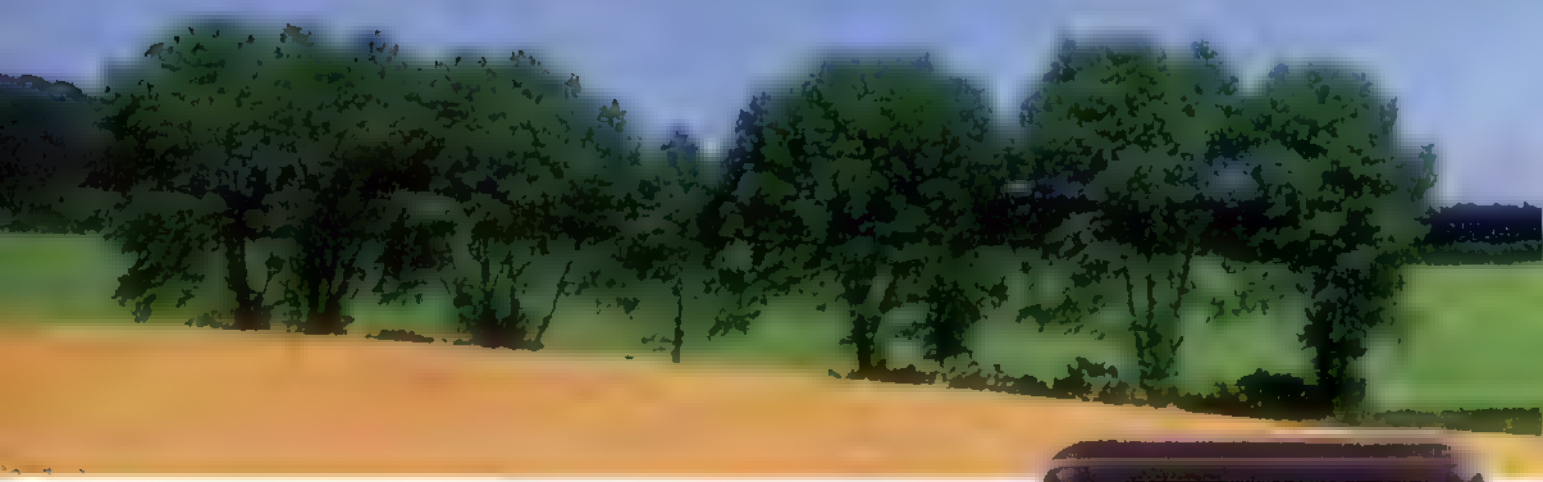
Q I'm having a problem when I play multi-player games on my PC. I'm getting ping rates of 300-400 milliseconds through Pipex dial and I'm connected through a BT phone line. One of my friends is getting 100-200 ping rates, although he lives further away than me. I've tried everything, like shutting things down in the background down. Could you please help me before I pull the rest of my hair out?
Mark Carey
gju79@dial.pipex.com

Roger Gann replies: None of the things you've done will have any effect on the problems you describe, Mark. There's precious little you can do to influence this aspect of Internet performance. Pinging is a diagnostic tool used to measure the responsiveness of the system – slow pings mean it's taking a long time for your data to reach its destination. And in gaming terms, a sluggish response time equates to a short life expectancy. The Net is a moveable feast when it comes to consistent performance and there are few performance guarantees available. Physical distance is irrelevant and it's not necessarily anything to do with Pipex – it could be the fault of a poor connection anywhere between you and the Quake server.

To achieve better ping rates, you'll have to do some research to find out when different servers are at their optimum speed. Certain games, such as Quake, have spawned a raft of Internet optimisation goodies to help you select the fastest, most responsive site. The best of these is undoubtedly QuakeSpy v5.2 (downloadable from **www.quakespy.com**). This will ping a huge list of Quake servers, showing you which are the fastest – so you can use the one with the lowest ping time. On a more general level, there are several good ping utilities which graphically display performance and can help you identify the bottlenecks – Ping Plotter is one that caught my eye (at **www.nessoft.com**). Or you could try good old Net.medic, from **www.vitalsigns.com**.

Every month, we pick the best question sent in to Expert Help and the lucky reader will win a stylish Memo Classic Flex Pager (worth £49.99) with the new Mini-Mail service. The Mini-Mail service includes free email notification for a year (worth £100) and a free personal Web-based email address which is yours forever. Any emails sent to this address can be automatically forwarded to your pager (up to 100 a month). PageOne's Mini-Mail service is offered with all MiniCall pagers. For more details see **www.pageone.co.uk**

Steve you have an e-mail waiting



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few kilobytes and take seconds to download. If you find a menu system you like, you can usually find out how it was created by looking at the source code, but remember that ripping off other people's code is naughty and you might get your wrist slapped.

Getting into the picture (for free)

Q I design small sites as a profitable hobby. My major problem at the moment is graphics. Can you direct me to a cheap or free source of themed photographs? I've looked on the Web, but they're all a bit expensive.
Gordon Whale
gordon.whale@dial.pipex.com

Richard Baguley replies: There are plenty of sources of good, cheap photography on the Web. Photodisc (at www.photodisc.co.uk) has started selling its images over the Internet, and has a database of over 75,000 photos which you can buy for a reasonable $19.99 (around £12) for use on your Web pages. There's a searchable database, so you can type in a subject and it'll come back with a selection of relevant pictures that you can buy for unlimited use with a credit card.

Other good royalty-free photo libraries include John Foxx (at www.johnfoxx.com) and Corel Studio (at www.corel.com). You can also use the Lycos photo search engine (at www.lycos.com/picturethis) to find pictures of a particular subject, but you should check the copyright status of anything you find. Just because it's on the Internet it doesn't mean you can use it without paying a fee.

Home on the domain range

Q I'm hoping you can clear up a problem I've had with my ISP and domain name Web forwarding. Having designed a site for a local delicatessen, I planned to register a domain name and access the site (using my free ISP Web space) via Web forwarding.

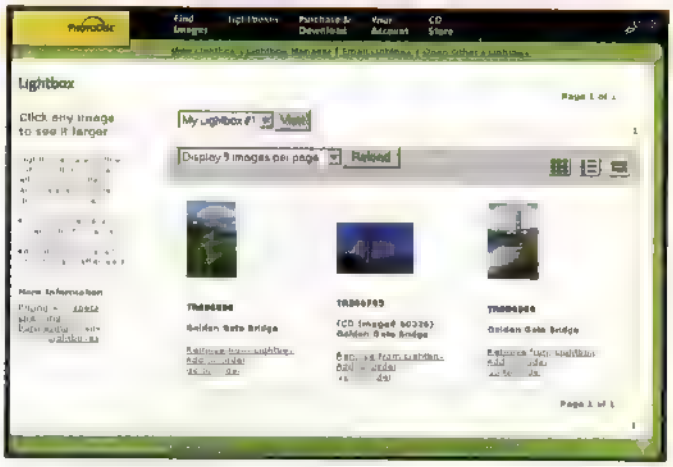
Before registering, I called my ISP to check how it all worked. It said Web forwarding to my free space wasn't possible because my IP address was dynamic instead of static. I would have to register and get hosting with Saqnet at a cost of £200. The domain name company, in contrast, claimed it could forward to any URL and felt Saqnet was simply looking for business.

I moved to Virgin.net, registered www.thefarmdairy.co.uk, and my first site's up and running, but I remain in the dark on the question of dynamic IP addresses. Can you shed any light on the subject?
Dave Tillotson
rhidave@saqnet.co.uk

Richard Baguley replies: I think there's been some confusion here. Many ISPs don't support domain name forwarding because their systems simply can't handle it. The Web space is designed for home users putting up their Web pages, not for commercial sites. Many ISPs exclude the use of this Web space for commercial purposes.

Another reason is that most ISPs will use a single computer with a single domain name for your Web space, so your address exists in sub-directories. This is why your free Web space looks something like www.ben.net/~username. It requires extra software and configuration to let this same machine look after multiple domain names, so most ISPs don't allow it.

This isn't connected with the business of Dynamic IP addresses – this is where an ISP gives your computer a different IP address (such as 194.72.242.1, that's used to identify your computer on the Net) every time you call up and connect to the Net. This makes life easier for the ISP and means it uses fewer IP addresses, which are beginning to run out.



Photodisc's new online store lets you buy images and animations over the Internet at extremely reasonable prices

Which Outlook to use?

Q I got Outlook 97 with my new PC and went online with Freeserve. The software has loaded without any problems, but I now have Outlook Express as my mail package when I log on to Freeserve. I also have a problem when I email files to colleagues – it looks for Outlook 97, so it doesn't work. Can I get all my programs, including Freeserve, to use Outlook 97 as the default mail package? I asked Freeserve's tech support, but they couldn't help.
Andy Ford
ANDREWFORD@roylefields.freeserve.co.uk

Richard Baguley replies: You can change the default mail client by going to the Internet control panel (from the Control Panel option which is in your Start menu under Settings). Click on the programs tab and select Outlook 97 from the Mail drop down menu. Your programs should automatically start using Outlook 97 when you select the Send to email recipient option.

Where do all the leased lines go?

Q Can you tell me where the ISPs get their link to the Internet? I've heard of leased lines and ISDN, but surely these

Top reader's tip wins £200 voucher

I've got another tip to add to your 90 top time-saving tips from the March issue. Next time you find a site that you find interesting enough to re-visit, instead of just bookmarking it, drop your mouse over the location marker (next to the address window) and it'll slant right. Now simply drag the marker over to your bookmarks folder and drop it into an appropriate folder.
Alan Crocker
alan@crocker.freeserve.co.uk

Thanks for the tip, Alan. It's a pity this one doesn't work on Internet Explorer, but it certainly makes it easier to organise your bookmarks in Navigator.

Alan wins himself a £200 shopping spree at top audio-visual Web site Unbeatable. With over 2,500 products available online, it's the place to find everything from a roll of film to a widescreen telly. Backed by mail order specialists, Capital Sound & Vision, all orders are despatched by first-class post or next day courier.
www.unbeatable.co.uk

Once the location marker is slanting right, you're ready to head for your bookmarks folder

unbeatable.co.uk

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FREE DOMAIN	YES	YES	95	YES
WEB SPACE INCLUDED	YES	NO	NO	20Mb
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24 HR TECH SUPPORT	YES	Connection only	YES	YES
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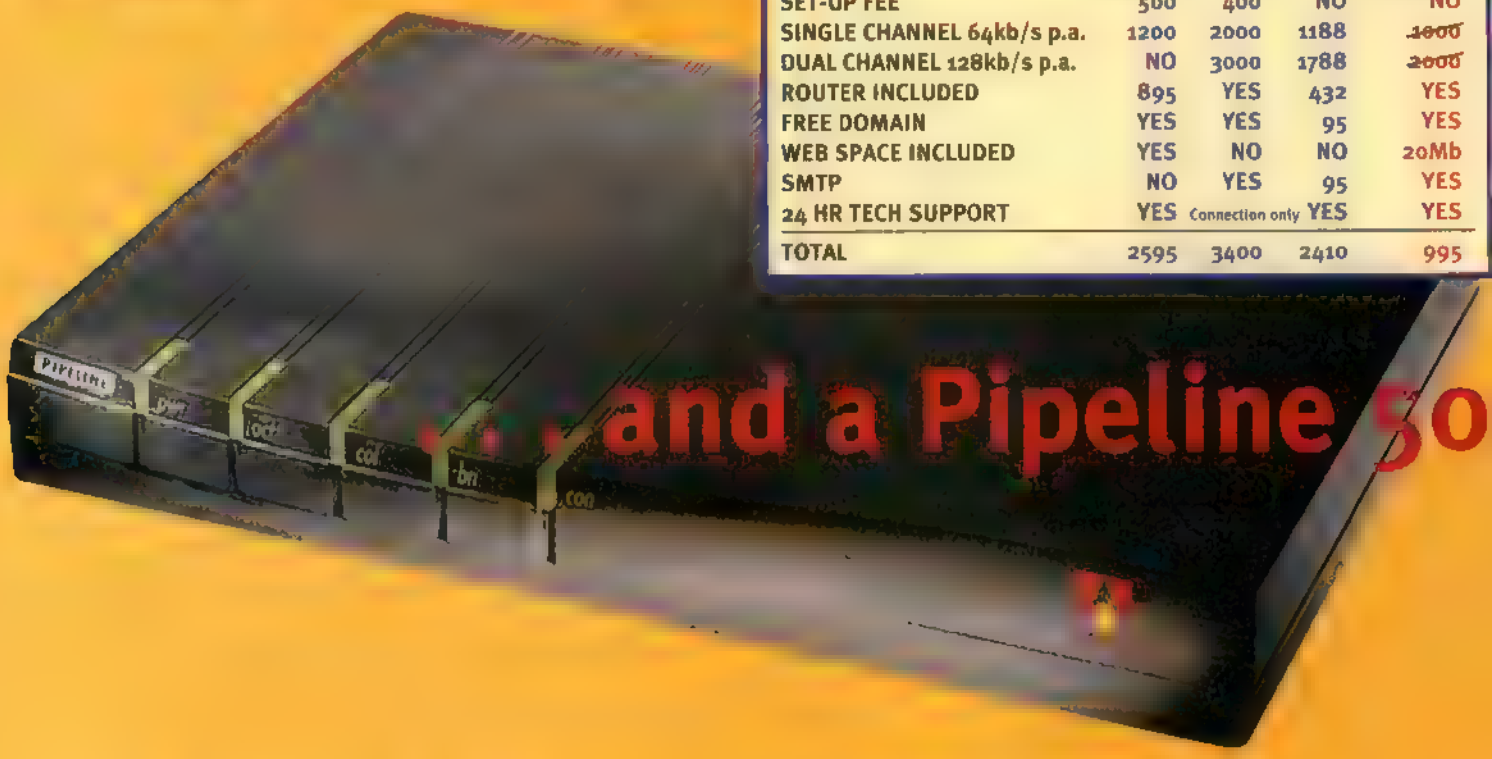

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methods aren't fast enough to run all of the ISP's users. Do all the ISPs use the same source? If they do, why is there such a difference in price?
Daniel Journo
daniel@journo.freeserve.co.uk

Richard Baguley replies: It really depends on the size of the ISP, Daniel. Many smaller ISPs buy their Internet access from companies such as BT Net (at **www.bt.net**) or GX networks (at **www.gxnet.co.uk**), which sell them a large, fast connection to the Internet. These are usually capable of carrying many megabytes of information per second – tens or hundreds of times faster than most leased lines or ISDN connections.

Larger ISPs run their own connections to the Internet – companies like Demon Internet or Global Internet have lots of connections to the Net, including connections to the big Internet exchanges in the US and Europe. Have a look at the map of UUNet's worldwide network at **www.uk.uu.net/network**.

The differences in cost are similar to price variations found in supermarkets – everyone tries to offer the best deal they can with the overheads they have. These costs can vary – an ISP can choose the size of connection it wants to the Net, with larger connections naturally costing more. There are two main options for ISPs. The first is the mass market approach and charge a small amount to many customers. The other approach is to have fewer customers, and deal with them on a personal level.

The new breed of ISPs, such as Freeserve, have complicated this by charging only for the telephone call which they take a percentage of, and not for access.

Legal Brief: How to sell safely to children

Children are lucrative targets for online business. But, as Michael Chissick explains, extra care should be taken when selling to minors as they can cause businesses a real legal headache

Consider this nightmare scenario for any e-commerce business – an exciting new software product is launched on a company's Web site and 1000 orders are received within the first week. The company places an order with its sub-contractor to meet the demand. It transpires that 90 per cent of the orders were placed by children. All but a few of the children's parents are shocked by the violent nature of the product and void the orders made by their children. The company ends up selling only 150 products, which doesn't even meet the costs of its sub-contractor, and the company is obliged to pay, despite the cancelled orders.

This scenario is quite possible. Under English contract law, children under the age of 18 (minors) have the best of both worlds. A contract made with a minor is not enforceable by the seller unless it's for the purchase of necessities, such as food, clothing and shelter. In other words, if the child doesn't pay, there's nothing the seller can do. On the other hand, the minor can enforce the contract against the seller.

Shopkeepers on the high street can at least guess the age of a potential buyer and refuse to sell to someone who is clearly under 18 years old. It's different for remote sellers, such as mail order companies and e-commerce businesses, as it's impossible to tell the age of the person placing the order. Telephone companies have already suffered at the hands of children that have ordered telephone lines without their parents' knowledge – they've been unable to enforce the bills run up by children. For sellers of adult products, such as tobacco, alcohol and bookmaking, the risks are even greater. They face criminal sanctions, as well as unenforceable contracts, by selling to minors.

Although these risks cannot be entirely eliminated, there are a couple of practical steps that you can take to avoid disaster. Companies that want to completely avoid dealing with children online can employ the Content Advisor, which is found on most Web browsers. The software is based on ratings created by the Recreational Software Advisory Council to limit the degree of sex, violence and bad language accessed by children. On the basis that a parent would also want to protect their children from adult products, a company could classify its site as containing sex or violence just to get the RSAC system to impose its restrictions.

Nevertheless, online providers must still rely upon parents taking preventative action regarding their children. The RSAC system only works if parents enable it and change the relevant settings.

Companies who wish to sell to children online could insist on accepting payment by debit card only. These are not credit cards, but permit a minor to buy goods and services provided there are sufficient funds in the bank or building society account. The goods are paid for before they're received, which makes a significant difference. It means that if a dispute arises, the minor would bear the burden and cost of having to sue for wrongful payment. They would also have to prove that the goods were not necessities (and therefore that the contract is not enforceable). As a result, it's fairly safe to sell to minors who use their own debit cards.

Web sites that offer goods to children have to be especially careful about how they sell to them

The position is different if, having paid for the goods, the minor changes their mind before the goods are delivered. In this situation, the vendor is unable to rely upon its normal terms and conditions regarding cancellations. If the child informs the vendor that they're a minor and wish to withdraw, they're entitled to a full refund.

Michael Chissick is head of the Internet and On-Line Law Group at City law firm Field Fisher Waterhouse. He can be contacted at mpc@ffwlaw.com

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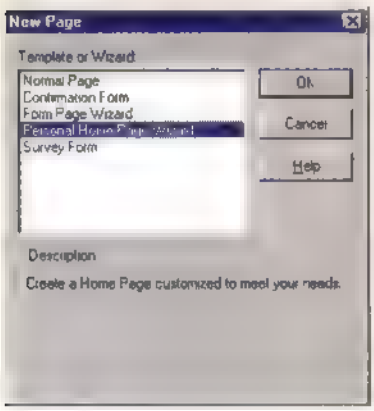
Portchester Hants PO16 9XE

Web design on the cheap [and easy]

Once you're on the Internet, you'll think about producing your own Web site. But did you know you already have everything you need to make it? Cliff Joseph shows you just how easy and cheap Web design can be

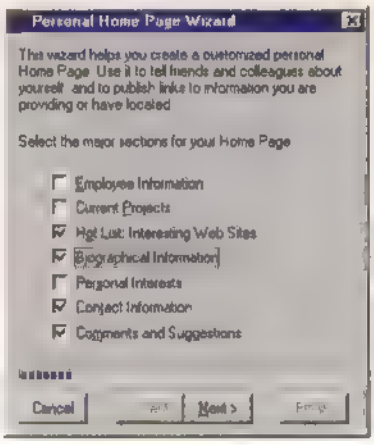
Step 1

Once you've launched FrontPage Express, select the New command from the File menu. If you're feeling brave, you can start with a completely blank page and design your layout from scratch. But just to show you how quick and easy it is to get started, we're going to choose the predefined personal home page wizard.



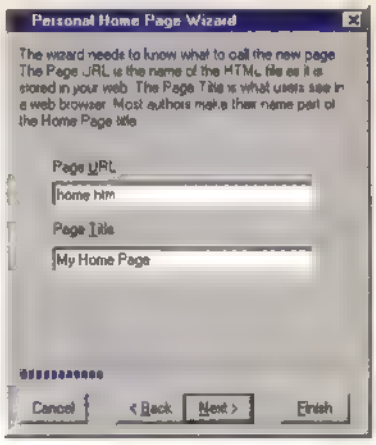
Step 2

The wizard asks you what sort of information you want to include on your new home page. There are options such as employee information, which businesses could use to create pages for a corporate intranet, but we'll stick with personal information, such as a list of your favourite Web sites, email and a simple biography.



Step 3

This is an important step. You have to give your home page a name and a title. The name you give to the HTML file that you save on your hard disk such as home.htm. The page title is the text that will show up on the title bar of a Web browser when someone visits your Web site. Don't confuse the two or your Web site will look a bit muddled.



This section of the magazine might be called Web Professional, but you don't have to be a pro to start designing your own Web pages. You don't need a huge amount of expensive hardware or software either. (We were thinking of calling this the 'Web amateur on a pathetic budget' section, but we thought it might not sound aspirational enough.)

What you will need is a PC and access to the Internet, either through a dial-up account with an ISP or a connection via an office network. There are plenty of free ISPs to choose from and most of them provide you with free Web space, so you don't have to pay for Internet access unless you want to. Once you're connected to the Net, you'll find plenty of free software that'll let you start designing your Web pages right away.

There's a wide assortment of freeware and shareware on the Internet, as well as trial versions of programs that you can experiment with for a limited period. As you get more experienced, you might decide to pay for a commercial Web design program, or find that you're happy to stick with your free software.

FrontPage Express

For the purposes of this article, we'll concentrate on a program called

Keep organised

You don't have to understand HTML tags to create your own Web pages, but you do need to be reasonably organised. When you use an editor, such as FrontPage Express, to insert graphics into your page, it might look as if the graphics files have been physically embedded within the page. In fact, the editor simply inserts an HTML tag that acts as a pointer to the graphics file, which remains on your hard disk

The same applies to other media elements, such as sound files and animations. These files remain separate from your Web pages and are loaded into the page whenever you (or visitors to your Web site) open the page.

You have to be careful, though, because your page will always look for these files where they were when you first used them. If you move a graphics file to somewhere else on your hard disk, your page will be left with a blank gap on it, because it won't be able to find the file it's looking for.

The hypertext links that let you travel from one page to another work in exactly the same way. If you link your main home page to your hobbies page, and then you move the hobbies page somewhere else, the link between the pages will be broken because the hobbies page is no longer in the place the link originally pointed to.

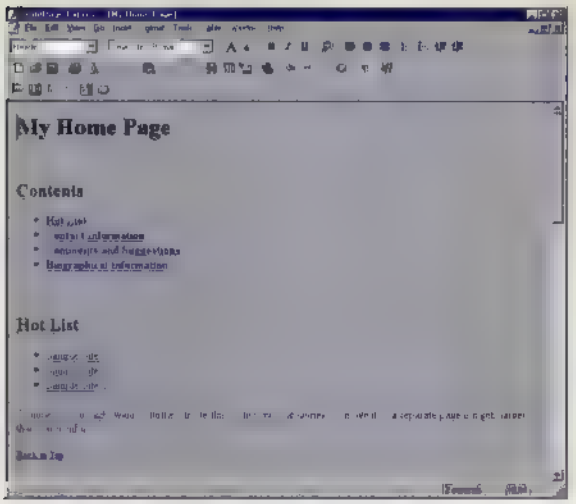
It's therefore important to make sure that you have an organised directory structure that'll let your pages find their graphics and other files when they need them. This will also prevent the hyperlinks between various pages from being broken.

Some people prefer to have one big directory that contains all the pages and graphics files for an entire site. Others like to divide their sites into a series of grouped pages, with each group being stored in a directory of its own, along with the necessary graphics and other files. All these individual directories can then be stored within one main directory that contains the entire site. This means that, when you're ready to upload the site to your ISP's Web server, you can just upload that main directory and the entire site will be uploaded at once.

Most commercial HTML editing programs include site and link management features to help you keep track of all your pages and files, but you can manage without them as long as you remember to keep your directory structure organised.

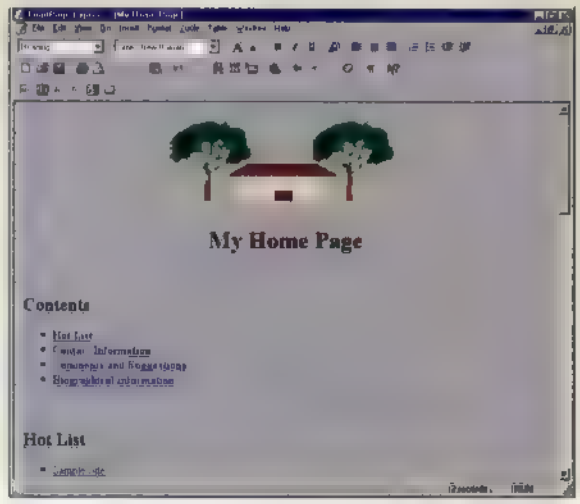
Step 4

FrontPage Express now uses the information you've entered to automatically create your home page for you – and there's not an HTML tag in sight. The page is divided into sections containing the Hot List, email info, and other items that you specified earlier. The layout's a bit dull, but you can now use the program's other tools to liven things up a bit.



Step 5

The first step is to brighten things up with some graphics. Any HTML editor will let you import graphics, make them bigger or smaller, and reposition both graphics and text in order to change the layout. We've used a bit of clip art we found on our hard disk, but you could easily use a scanner or digital camera to bring in some more interesting photos.



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LYCOS

Other free alternatives

FrontPage Express isn't the only HTML editor that's available free of charge. There's no end of freeware and shareware available elsewhere on the Internet. Here's just a selection of some of the better programs that we've come across. We've also listed a couple of the better freeware/ shareware archives. Remember, though, that shareware isn't free. Please support the authors of shareware by paying the (usually small) registration fee

Netscape Composer
Microsoft's rival provides a free HTML editing component with its browser
www.netscape.com/computing/download
Coffee Express
A free, cut-down version of the commercial CoffeeCup editor
www.coffeecup.com
Webstop
A free service that'll design your page and email it back to you
webstop.virtualave.net
HoTMetalPro
An evaluation version of the popular HTML editor
www.softquad.com
DaveCentral
An excellent archive site with HTML editors and other useful design tools
www.davecentral.com
The Free Site
Calls itself 'the home of the Web's best freebies' – and it's not far wrong
www.thefreesite.com
Two for Mac users
Free version of the BBEdit text editor (from www.barebones.com), or the excellent graphical editor, PageSpinner (from www.optima-system.com).

Web Pages That Suck tells designers what they're doing wrong and highlights a new site every day. DaveCentral has hundreds of freeware and shareware tools

FrontPage Express, which is a cut-down version of Microsoft's commercial FrontPage program. FrontPage Express comes free with a full installation of Microsoft's Internet Explorer browser. If you're using Windows 95 or above, you've got both Internet Explorer and FrontPage Express tucked away on your hard disk somewhere.

Older versions of Windows might not have FrontPage Express installed, but you can download it free from Microsoft's site (at www.microsoft.com/msdownload). Internet Explorer is also on all of our cover CDs. By the way, using FrontPage to design your pages doesn't mean you have to use IE as your Web browser – though Microsoft would prefer it if you did.

FrontPage Express is a pretty basic HTML editor, but it's got most of the features you'll need to create a simple Web page. Like any graphical editor, it hides all the HTML tags behind an easy to use graphical interface, so you don't have to know about HTML tags in order to get started with your first Web page.

And you don't have to be a trained designer, as the program can help you with the layout of your pages. Any decent HTML editor will provide similar tools, so the steps outlined in this article can also be used to create pages in other editors. The fundamentals are the same – there's a bit of technical jargon, but you'll be surprised at how straightforward it all is.

Tag – you're it

Web pages are created using a programming language known as HTML – hypertext markup language.

Hypertext is just text that's linked to other bits of text and graphics, either within the same Web page or on other pages elsewhere on the Web. It's this ability to link pages that makes the Web possible.

The hypertext markup language consists of a series of tags, which control the structure of the HTML page and the appearance of text, graphics and other elements on a page. A Web browser can recognise an HTML tag because they're always placed within angular brackets (<>). The tag that displays text in a bold typeface looks like this – <B>.

So when your Web browser opens an HTML page and sees the <B> tag it knows that any text following that tag must be displayed in bold. To turn the bold text off and return to plain text, you use the same tag with a forward slash character to indicate the end of the tag – </B>. Similarly, the tag for underlined text is <U> and the tag that ends the underlined text is </U>

An experienced Web designer will use hundereds of tags. We're not even going to attempt to cover them all here. But all HTML tags can be printed on the page using the standard text characters available on an ordinary PC keyboard. This means you don't need any kind of special software to write HTML.

Any application that lets you type text onto a blank page can be used to write and edit HTML pages. You could even use the little Notepad program that comes free as part of Windows (or Simpletext for Mac users).

Fortunately, it isn't necessary to memorise all those HTML tags before you can design your first Web page. Some people prefer to write HTML by hand, using a simple text editor, but I'm not one of them. Writing HTML by hand is too much like old-fashioned computer programming for my taste.

Instead, there's a second group of HTML editing programs that provide a graphical user interface (GUI). These are also known as WYSIWYG editors – what you see is what you get. These editors shows you the page as it looks when viewed in a browser, rather than showing you the underlying HTML tags.

FrontPage Express is a graphical editor which lets you create HTML

pages by placing text and graphics elements straight onto the page using the mouse or the keyboard, just as you would with an ordinary wordprocessor or DTP program.

If you want to put some text in a bold typeface, select the text with the mouse and click the Bold button on the toolbar. The program puts the necessary tags on the page, but keeps them invisible unless you specifically ask to see them. All you see is the bold text, just as anyone who visits your Web page would see in their browser. This lets you concentrate on the appearance of the page.

There are purists who argue that graphical HTML editors are sloppy, and that they use tags badly. That might be true, but graphical HTML editors have opened up Web design to millions of non-technical people who wouldn't otherwise go near a text-based HTML editor.

Besides, like most graphical HTML editors, FrontPage Express lets you switch into source mode, where you can view and edit the underlying tags. This is a good way of introducing yourself to tags, as you can switch between views to see how they interrelate. But there are plenty of people who've created Web sites without ever looking at an HTML tag, so if you're looking for a quick and easy way to get started, a graphical editor is your best bet.

FrontPage Express is a fairly basic program and it doesn't provide more advanced features, such as frames. But there are plenty of other programs available and you might find one that has all the features you need to design your Web site without spending a single penny. im

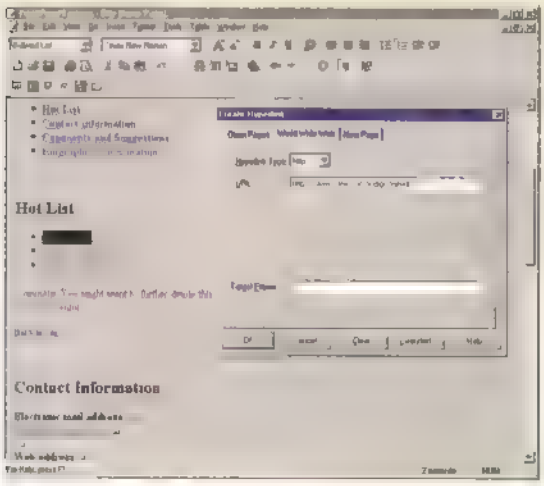
For further infomation

Even if you've got stacks of free software to play with, it's still useful to have a bit of help and advice on how to design attractive and effective Web pages. We'll be looking at how to put your Web pages onto your Web space in the next issue, but if you can't wait, here's a few good places to find out more about Web design.

Netscape has an extensive Web site devoted to information for Web designers, from beginners to corporate Web masters.
home.netscape.com/computing/webbuilding/index.html
WebTutor is a good online tutorial for beginners.
junior.apk.net/~jbarta/tutor
Dr Web is a bit technical, but this site has some useful beginner's info.
www.zeldman.com/askdrweb/index.html
IDG publishes the Dummies range of books and has a site for novice Web designers. There's some excellent advice site, with tutorials covering everything from simple HTML to Javascript and DHTML.
www.idg.net
Web Pages That Suck – how not to design a Web page.
www.webpagesthatsuck.com

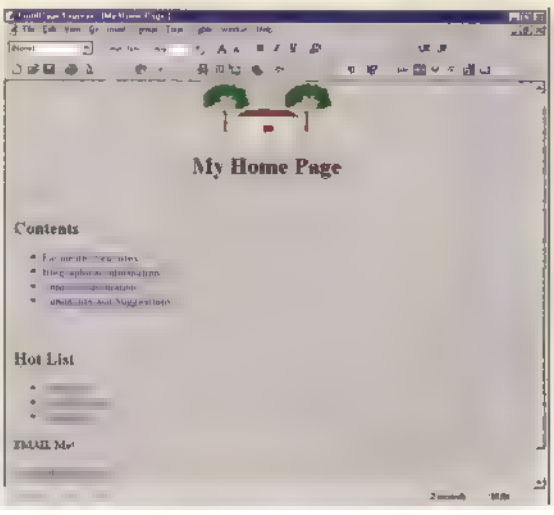
Step 6

Creating links between pages is what the Web is all about, but they're not complicated to produce. First, click on the text that forms the start of the link and enter the name for the link. Click on the Hyperlink tool in the toolbar to enter the URL for the linked page. The link can go to any page on the Web, or just to another page in your own site.



Step 7

All you have to do now is repeat these steps for the other parts of your Web page. This page took just 10 minutes to create in FrontPage Express. It might not look particularly exciting, but there's nothing to stop you experimenting with the layout and adding elements such as graphics, sound and animation as you go along.



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Born again HTML
[converting documents for the Web]

So you've got all those 'legacy' documents that need to go on the Web. Do you really have to code them by hand? Of course not. Davey Winder explains your options

The Internet is full of jokes – I stumbled across this blinder recently – Q: What do the Web and a hamburger have in common? A: You don't want to watch while either are being made. How true this is, particularly if you're a webmaster with the tedious task of converting archives of legacy documents into HTML pages which have to follow the corporate brand and which blend in with the existing Web site style.

Moving an archive onto the Web can be a less than pleasant experience, especially if those documents are not only in a format other than HTML, but in a variety of old and new formats. Having said this, converting legacy application documents into HTML has never been easier, thanks to advances in software development. You must approach the project from the right direction, though, and with the right levels of expectation for the finished product to avoid costly mistakes.

You might ask yourself why anyone would want to convert Web unfriendly documents into HTML in the first place – surely your best bet would be to start again and produce properly formatted, well designed pages from scratch? That's certainly the obvious route, but you'd be thinking like a webmaster and not like your client, and they're the ones who ultimately pay the Web piper and specify the MP3 tune. Your client will want a Web presence and will expect a professional job, but the budget is as limited as its technical expertise. Unfortunately you have to convert around 500 company documents stored in various non-HTML formats, such as Word, Write, Excel and PowerPoint.

Never overlook the obvious, if there's a Save as HTML option in your legacy application, then make sure you use it

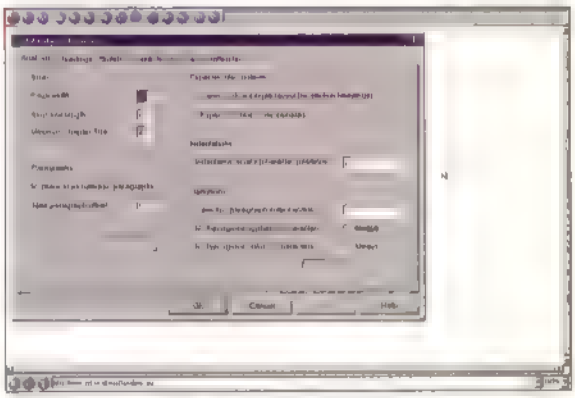
There are lots of different solutions to this dilemma, ranging from the simple and cheap to the complex and expensive. You should remember that no legacy document converted to HTML is ever going to be 100 per cent successful – expect to roll your sleeves up and do some tag tweaking somewhere along the line.

Try to keep it simple

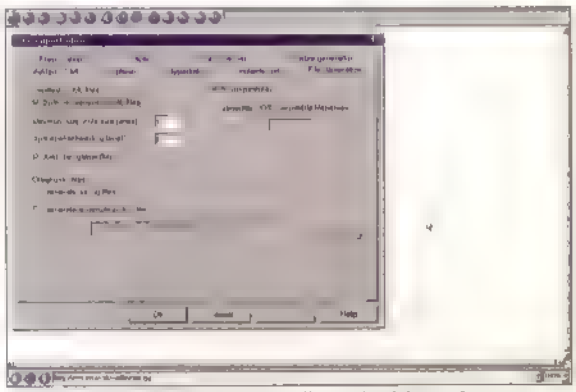
The best place to start, as always, is with the simple solutions. Never overlook the obvious – it might just work. Are you dealing with text that can be cut and pasted into your existing HTML editing software while preserving the formatting of the original file?

If you're working with relatively old word processed documents, check the latest version of the word processor software to see if it'll open these documents using an import filter. If so, import it into the application and use the Save as HTML feature. If not, save the document in RTF (Rich Text Format) and import that. Sadly, the Save as HTML option isn't a great solution to your conversion problems, especially if you have hundreds or thousands of documents to convert.

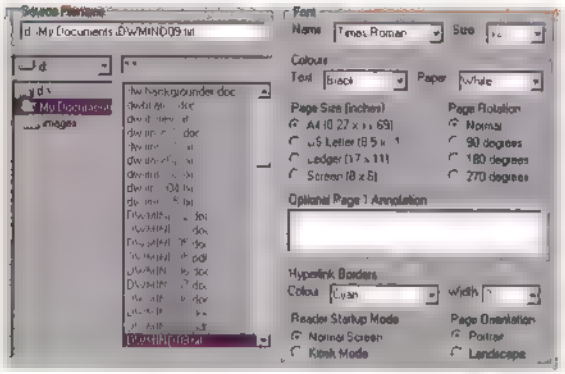
If RTF format files form the bulk of these, you can use dedicated software, such as RTFtoHTML (available from **www.sunpack.com/RTF/latest**) to handle batch processing without the need to open each document individually. This particular conversion software will split your large documents up into smaller linked pages, complete with hypertext indexes and a table of contents, and will support frames and tables. It's simple and economical with user licenses starting at just $39 (around £23) for a single user.



Edit the document analysis policy so AscToHTM knows how you want it to interpret the file for conversion



And then edit the document output policy so that it knows how you want the conversion to HTML to be structured



It's hard to imagine how anyone could go wrong with the simple yet powerful Gymnast, if you don't mind converting to PDF rather than HTML that is

Cheap and cheerful

Don't ignore these cheap and cheerful shareware software solutions, such as AscToHTM – a neat Windows utility for converting text files into linked HTML pages. It analyses your text documents, recognising heading information, multiple indentation levels, quoted text, emphasis and bullets, as well as formatted tables and even ASCII diagrams.

Any URLs, email addresses or newsgroups in the text will have links added automatically, as will cross-referenced section numbers in numbered sections and any keywords specified in a user link directory. You can generate content and directory pages, split large documents across smaller pages (with navigation bars as a footer), and add background colours, style sheets and JavaScript.

As long as the legacy document is laid out in a logical manner, the software works pretty well. A policy editor puts you firmly in control of the conversion process for document analysis and HTML output. A 30-day evaluation copy for Windows users can be downloaded from **www.yrl.co.uk/~jaf/asctohtm.html**. You'll also find all the relevant documentation and licensing details on YRL's Web site. At just £20, it's a cheap yet effective way of handling HTML conversions of simple text based documents.

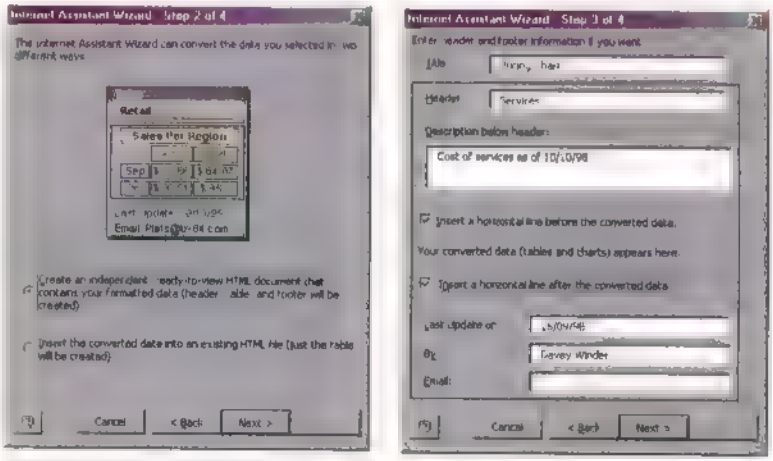
Don't bother with HTML

Another approach to getting text-based legacy documents online is to ignore HTML altogether and use Adobe Acrobat. Adobe's PDF format is a popular choice for retaining document structure and layout for the Web. Some people are put off by the thought of investing their cash in yet another software application and their time in learning how to use it.

Gymnast, at £20, is a simple solution with no learning curve. It's limited to text to PDF conversions, but if you have a large amount of text-based information to convert, it's an excellent buy. Gymnast supports hyperlinks within the document, hyperlinks to Web sites from the page, annotations and the automatic generation of bookmarks from headings. It's incredibly easy to use – you just choose a text file, select the options for formatting, and hit "Make PDF". I'm not easily impressed, but Gymnast is quick and efficient and for straightforward text to PDF conversions, without worrying about HTML, it's hard to think of an easier solution. You can download the evaluation version from **www.oakworth.demon.co.uk/gymnast.htm**

Converting your spreadsheet files is easy enough if you use a fairly recent version of Excel (97 or later). You simply load the relevant sheet, save it as HTML and, as if by magic, an Internet assistant appears. This takes you through the conversion process, letting you specify spreadsheet ranges for conversion – you can create standalone HTML document or insert spreadsheets directly into an existing page, and lets you add a header and title. It completes the job quickly, and the overall conversion quality is impressive preserving layout, column structure, spacing and content. Don't expect to be able to interact with the spreadsheet from the Web page after the conversion – this is a viewing-only operation.

For PowerPoint presentations, select Save as HTML and a wizard guides you through the process. This lets you use frames on the page, select the style of buttons and scale graphics for specific screen resolutions. You can retain slide animations, but it'll mean that



Converting Excel spreadsheets is made easier by the built in wizard that guides you through the process. Although customisation of the page is rather limited by the wizard approach, it does the job, and does it quickly and without too many hiccups

Web Integration

The problems of converting legacy documents could soon be a thing of the past. You'll know this already if you've been using one of the more recent office suite applications

Microsoft Office 2000 is a good example of this continuing trend, being more Web centric than ever. Online collaboration will be a big feature, as will the ability to easily save all document types as HTML. This gives faster information sharing locally (via the corporate intranet) and it makes it easier to publish documents onto the global Internet.

This Web-centric model is an integral part of Microsoft's strategy for its Office products, which aims to deliver tightly integrated collaborative abilities within the document creation process. According to Microsoft's research, legacy document conversion by a single webmaster and the resulting bottlenecking of sharing information, has led to a 'dead Web' phenomenon experienced by some 80 per cent of large corporate intranets surveyed.

With easy conversion of all Office files to HTML format, saved directly to departmental intranets or the Web itself, Microsoft hopes to help overcome this phenomenon.

Furthermore, these documents will not lose their rich formatting properties when downloaded from the Web and put back into Office applications.

The competition isn't far behind. Lotus eSuite embraces the Web evermore having been designed from the ground up as a Web-based modular solution with Java developed applications. The Lotus SmartSuite Millennium office suite includes FastSite, which handles conversion from 25 file formats into HTML and provides preformatted templates for ease of use (while still retaining manual editing facilities for those who can't help but dabble).

One thing is certain – the office suites of tomorrow will be instrumental in eradicating the legacy problems of today.

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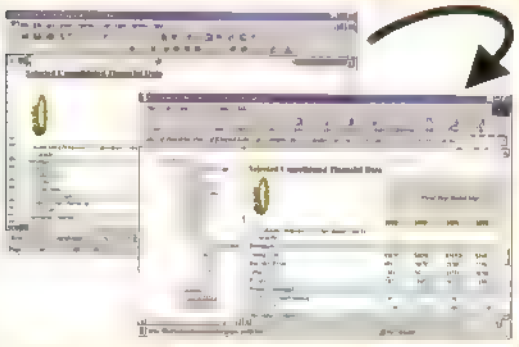
A View from the Server Side

At the other end of the scale is the complete server side solution. Products such as Verity HTML Export let you make dynamic conversions of server held documents on the fly, using Active Server Page templates. This will benefit organisations which have seriously large archives to convert to HTML. Place all of the files in a folder and let the server create templates to turn them into meaningful HTML pages. High-level template configuration is possible using the GUI interface.

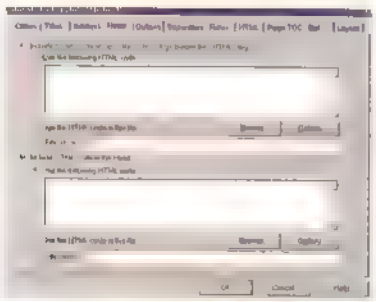
Formatting can be controlled by including embedded CSS links in the HTML right through to programming HTML Export's COM interface. Even the non-anorak operator can use it thanks to an HTML design wizard. Multiple page documents are dealt with by including a navigation panel down the left-hand side of the screen. You can specify spreadsheet column widths and remove empty columns, and headers for both columns and rows can be auto-generated. The attraction of this method is it doesn't need an HTML editor or the applications that created the original documents – it regenerates the files from their native format into HTML.

Most of the common business application formats are supported, including newcomers such as MS Office 2000, Lotus SmartSuite Millennium and Coral WordPerfect Suite 8. But legacy applications are the real interest here, and they're not forgotten. The full list of supported file formats can be found at **www.keyview.com/ProductInfo/formats.html**. They include Lotus AmiPro v2 and 3; Lotus Word Pro v96, 96, R9; MS Word v2, 6, 95, 97; MS Works v1,2,3,4; WordPerfect v5,6,7,8; QuattroPro v7,8; Lotus 1-2-3 v2,3,4,5,96,97, Lotus Freelance v96,97,R9 and MS PowerPoint v6,95,97.

You'll also find almost any graphics file format you care to mention. Pricing is per server on a site license basis, starting at a whopping £8,000. For further information contact Viatec Software at sales@viatec.co.uk or visit **www.verity.com**



It might be expensive, but for high quality, high volume legacy conversions at server level, it takes some beating – as this before and after shot clearly illustrates



The template approach used by HTML Transit lets you have tight control over the structure and style of your converted documents – vital if you want to keep your corporate client happy

Top 5 Conversion Project Tips

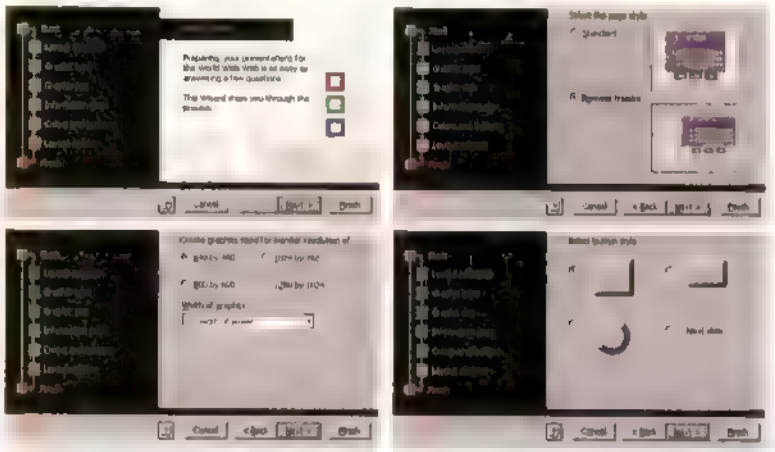
1 Know the formats you're dealing with and assess the most straightforward approach to conversion. There's no point budgeting for specialist software and double-figure man hours if the archive is all plain text that can be simply and quickly converted into HTML using existing software.

2 Your preferred software solution must support ALL the formats you'll need to convert.

3 Your software must support batch processing, unless you want to spend the rest of your working life converting files one by one.

4 Unless you're dealing with seriously large archives, preparing files for conversion can save serious cleaning up time afterwards. Ensure line breaks are only used to end paragraphs rather than end lines and create white space. Make sure your documents use a clearly defined style, making use of any header hierarchies supported by the legacy application.

5 Don't expect miracles – some HTML converters are better than others and none can replace the human touch. You'll need to tweak the tagging in places, but at least using a converter will free you from the majority of the donkey work.



Converting PowerPoint presentations is easy if you use Microsoft's built-in wizards

anyone wanting to view the results will need to download a PowerPoint player plug-in if they don't already have it. It might be best if you opt for JPEG graphics instead

Ageing gracefully

If you're looking at some seriously old legacy documents, your options become limited. Assuming none of the previous advice fits the bill, you might be forced into resorting to the specialist software approach, and that means flashing your cash. For high volume archives or ongoing document conversion, a server side on the fly approach might be your best bet (see box out). But you don't need to spend an absolute fortune if the task is a single archival conversion job of some volume.

Using a program such as Info Access HTML Transit, you can batch process large volumes of documents quickly and efficiently, using a template-based wizard. Neat touches include the ability to specify that all header 1 source content should be converted to <H1> content, and that each occurrence triggers a new page – this keeps large documents down to Web-sized chunks. It covers all the major file formats and supports separate framing of table of contents, indexing and document windows. It also has a logical and hierarchical menu structure for ease of use.

You can use predefined templates or create your own to ensure that a corporate style is maintained across the documents added to the site. Graphics are handled well, being embedded within the page in GIF or JPEG format.

Another advantage of this kind of batch processing software is it'll automatically generate the navigation links between the pages it converts, saving you a tedious bit of tagging by hand. Prices start from $495 (around £300) for a single box license. Details can be obtained from Info Access at **www.infoaccess.com.** im

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Source: Zeus Technologies, 2 April 1999.
Survey of 72 firms (not all shown)

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How to create 360° panoramas

You can't help being impressed when you see a 360° panorama on the Web, and they're becoming more popular as people realise how simple they are to create. Richard Baguley shows you how to add panorama to your own site

For everything from stunning v stas of the south Pacif c to the nter ors of the .atest ,uxury cars, an increas ng number of Web sites are using 360° panoramas. It's easy to see why – they .et you move around, zoom in and out, and even move from p.ace to place by c..cking on an mage, so it's a great way to demonstrate what your site's about.

If you're trying to persuade peop e to stay at your hotel, a 360° panorama lets them look around the rooms and get an idea of how love.y they are. If you're creat ng a Web site about a local beauty spot, a 360° panorama makes peop e feel like they're there without having to leave the house.

It's easy to admire panoramas from afar, but you might th nk they're far too compl cated to produce on your own s'te. Not so. They're extremely simp.e to create and need l ttle (f any) spec alised equ pment or software.

With caref.. planning and a few s mple rules, you can even use a cheap camera, and you don't need to have a fancy Web site or the latest server software. Panoramas can even be run from the free Web space supp ed with your standard dial-up ISP account.

You can see James Rigg's panorama of the gardens at Trinity College at the Virtual Trinity site (www.trinity.ox.ac.uk/virtual)

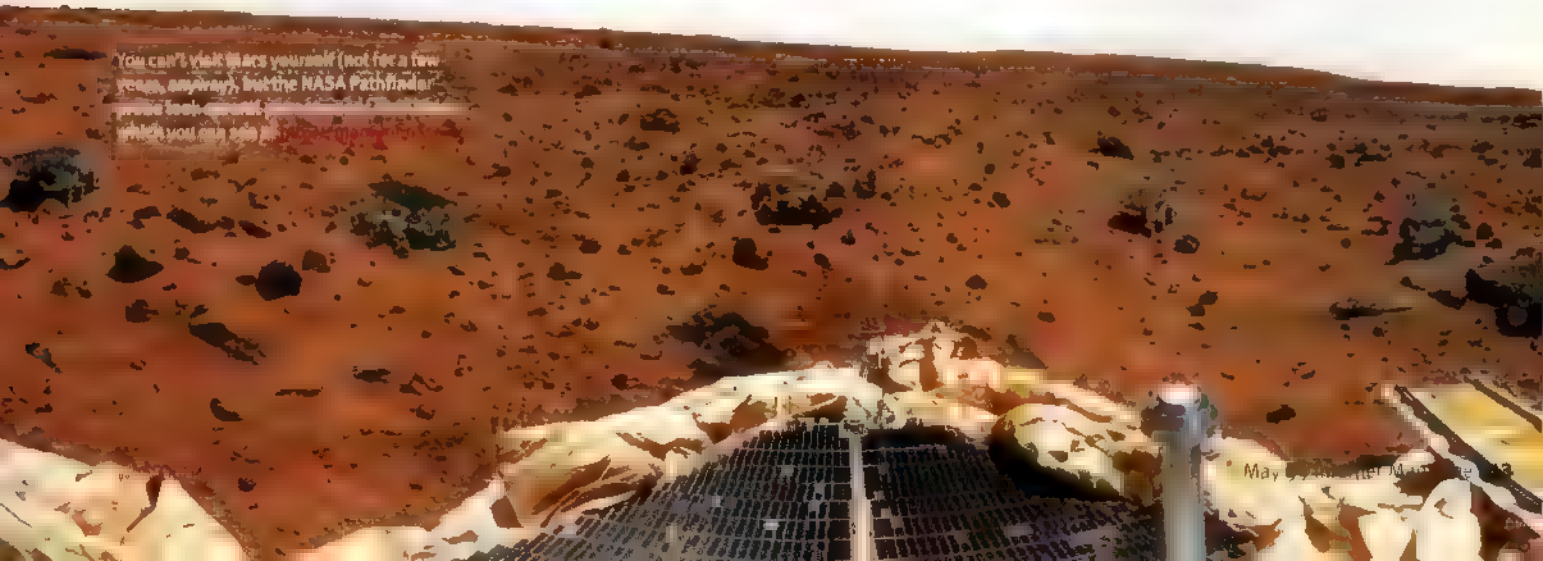
The process of creating panoramas s simple – you take a series of pict.res that cover the full 360° of the subject, and the software mports them, sticks them together and creates a sing.e image to form the panorama.

Taking your pictures

Once you've decided on the subject of your panorama, you can take the photographs using any type of camera – from a compact camera right up to a state of the art d gital product. You'll defin tely need a tripod, though – your panorama s created from a series of photos that are b ended together, but if your camera moves between the exposures, the mages won't match up. This is especial.y true if there are any objects in the foreground.

So stick the camera on a tripod and don't move it. Instead, rotate the tripod's head between exposures. Str ctly speaking, you should make sure the centre of rotation is through the film plane (the flat surface of the film that's exposed), but a standard tripod will be close enough for most cameras.

If you have problems, you might want to try an adjustab e tr pod head (ca.led a ➢



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Five top panorama tips

1 Take lots of pictures

Your panoramas will inevitably look bad if you don't take enough pictures to create them properly. Film is cheap (or free if you're using a digital camera), so take more pictures than you think you'll need.

2 Keep it steady

The photos that form your panoramas won't match up if your camera moves between exposures. Don't even think about trying to do a panorama holding the camera in your hands – it won't work. Use a monopod at the very least, and preferably a good, solid tripod.

3 Make notes of your settings

When you shoot a panorama, make a note of your camera settings, such as the focal length of the lens you use. If you don't, you'll have to make a guess when it comes to creating the panorama because the software asks you to set the type of lens you used.

4 People are a problem

If people are walking past when you take the photos, they'll end up appearing in the shots several times, which looks a bit odd. Try shooting your panoramas when people aren't around or consider investing in one of the systems that creates panoramas in one or two shots if it's a frequent problem (see the IPIX and BeHere systems on page 118).

5 Experiment

The best way to work out how to take good panoramas is to experiment by shooting a few panoramas of more mundane subjects (like your back garden or your local park) before you fly to the Bahamas.

panoramic head) that lets you move the camera back and forth to place the film path over the centre of rotation.

You'll get better results with a wide angle lens, but it's not essential. Using a standard lens just means you'll have to take more pictures to create the full 360° panorama. You'll typically need between eight and 20 images to cover the full 360°, depending on the focal length of the lens.

Once you're set up, take your photos. Each of the images should overlap the previous one by about a third, giving the panorama software a bit of space to overlap the images – see the two images below as an example. A good way to do this is to find a landmark (like a tree or lamppost) about a third from the edge of one image, and then rotate the camera until this is about a third of the width of the viewfinder from the other edge. It might be tempting to try and make the edges of the images match exactly, but don't – the software won't be able to match the images if they don't share some features.

Importing images

Once you've taken the photos, you need to import them into the computer. If you're not using a digital camera, you'll need to take your images to be scanned at a photo processors, either onto CD (try Kodak's Photo CD system) or floppy disk. Alternatively, you could buy a scanner and do it yourself – scanner prices start at around £80.

Whichever way you import the pictures, pay special attention to the resolution. Higher resolution pictures give you better results, but need more memory to work with. It's best to experiment with different resolutions – we've found that 300 x 500 pixels gives the best balance between quality and file size. Put all the images into a separate directory and number the images in sequence, so you remember the order they should be used in.

Creating your panorama

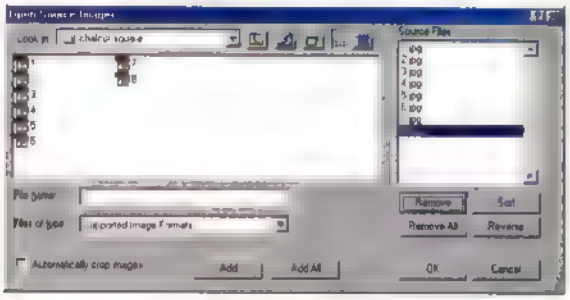
The specifics of creating a panorama vary between different types of software, but the idea is the same, and in this example we've used LivePicture's PhotoVista software. The process is simple – import the images into the program and let it match them up and create the panorama.

You start by importing the images into the software. This is where your prior organisation comes in – the list on the left shows the order in which the software will try and stitch the images together.

Once the images have been imported, the program begins to stitch the images together. But before this can be done, the program asks you what type of camera or lens you used to take the pictures. All lenses use distortion to make things at the edge of the image appear larger than they actually are, with the amount of distortion depending on the focal length of the lens.

The program can warp images to deal with this, but it needs to know

It's important to make sure your images overlap each other – this gives the software an idea of how the images are going to fit together to form the panorama



If you number your images in sequence, it makes it easier for the software to stitch the panorama correctly

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Software options

There are plenty of different programs available for creating panoramas, and each has its own strengths and weaknesses

PhotoVista

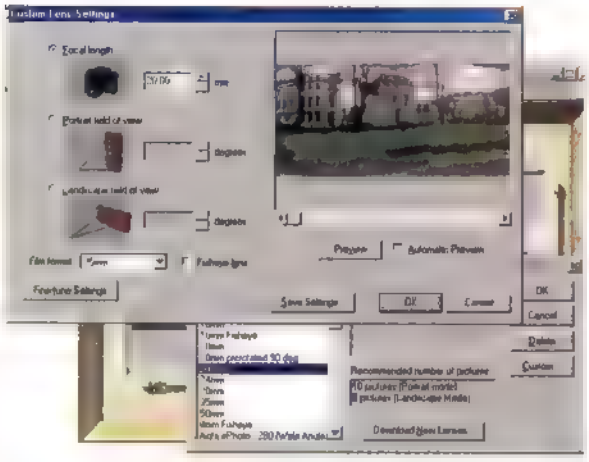
One of the first programs of this type, but still widely regarded as among the best. It's a relatively simple program aimed purely at producing panoramas, but it does this extremely well. More complex sites (with features such as animations within panoramas or hotlinks within panoramic pictures which lead you through to other pages or panoramas) can be produced with LivePicture's Reality Studio software. An evaluation version of the software is available from the LivePicture Web site.

Cost *£65 (approx £40)*
Contact *LivePicture*
www.livepicture.co.uk

QuickTime VR Authoring Studio

QuickTime is a widely-used standard, and QuickTime VR is used by many sites to produce their panoramas. There are two components for producing panoramas – the panorama stitcher and the panorama maker. However, producing panoramas is only part of what this powerful system can do – it also has features like hotlinks on panoramas (where a user can, for instance, move onto another panorama by clicking on a door) and streaming audio and video. Unfortunately, the authoring software to do all this clever stuff is only available for Apple Mac computers.

Cost *£279*
Contact *Apple*
www.apple.com/quicktime/qtvr



The software will ask you for the type of lens you used to take the pictures, so make sure you know this before you take your shots

what type of lens was used to take the original pictures so it can work out how much to warp the images.

PhotoVista contains a good list of cameras, including most of the digital models that have been introduced recently, and a good selection of conventional camera lenses. If your camera isn't included here, you can create your own setting by clicking on the Custom button and entering the details of your camera, which you should find in its manual.

Previewing your work

Once the lens is set up, you can start creating your panorama by clicking on the Stitch panorama button. Click on the Preview stitch and the program will warp the images to adjust for the lens and create a rough version of the panorama. Don't worry if it doesn't look great yet – it's only a rough version.

If you want to see what your finished product is going to look like on a Web page, select Show viewer from the panorama menu of the preview window. This lets you zoom around your panorama (by holding the left mouse button and scrolling) and zoom in and out of the picture (using the shift and control keys).

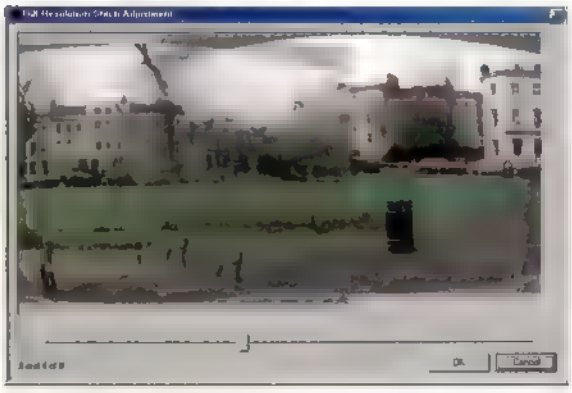
You'll notice some of the images don't match up. The reason for this is simple – the program makes a good stab at trying to match up the photos, but it doesn't always succeed. This is easy to remedy, though, as images can be manually aligned by closing the preview and double-clicking on the misaligned image. This will bring up a window with the full resolution images, and you can align them yourself. They still won't match up exactly, but you should be able to get them pretty close.

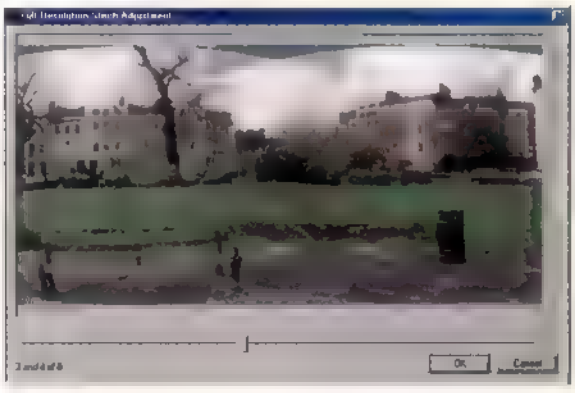
Once the alignment is correct, you create the final panorama by clicking on the Stitch panorama button followed by the Full stitch. This'll probably take a long time to complete (especially on slower machines) as the program is far more precise about aligning the images and blending them together. Again, once the stitching process is complete, you can preview the final result as it'll appear on your Web page by selecting Show viewer from the panorama menu.

Browser requirements

There are some things you should remember. Like all programs of this type, your visitors will need a bit of software to be able to view your panorama, which is available as a Netscape plug-in, an Internet Explorer ActiveX control or as a Java applet.

Java applets don't always run that fast, though, so some visitors might get slow scrolling or zooming when they're looking at your panoramas. ActiveX controls and plug-ins are quicker, but your visitors will need to download and install the software before they can use them.





The preview shows how the computer aligned the images (right) and how you can improve the stitch by tweaking it by hand (far right)

Further information

We've really only scratched the surface of this area – there are many other things you can do with panoramas. Here are a few good sites to inspire you

QTVR World
This is mainly a sales site for a photographic company that produces panoramas, but it contains a good selection of links to some stunning examples of QuickTime VR (QTVR) panoramas, like Virtual Las Vegas (at www.qtvrworld.com/vegas/html/vegaslisting.html) and some nice tips on producing QTVR panoramas.
www.qtvrworld.com

Panormania
Another company that produces panoramic images (mainly using surround video and QTVR). The site is packed with examples of its work.
www.panormania.com

The Panoramic Network
As the name suggests, this site contains hundreds of links to other panoramic sites, including several clubs for panoramic photographers and a store that specialises in selling panoramic equipment and software.
www.panoramic.net

The Guide to Panoramas and Panoramic Photography
An excellent (and UK-biased) guide to the ins and outs of panoramic photography by James Rigg. This site includes an excellent problem-solving section and a gallery with some excellent panoramas.
www.pinefarm.demon.co.uk/james/panoguide

If any more tweaking is required, you can go back to the main screen and realign the images. But if you're happy with what you've produced, you can give it a name and save it.

Final stitch

PhotoVista has a feature that lets you build a complete Web page to show what you've created. To do this, select either Plug-in or Java from the HTML export menu – depending on the version of the player you want to use. This creates a complete Web page, including all the HTML code required to display the panorama and the Java applet. You can now put the panorama onto your Web page. PhotoVista has already created your HTML code, so all you have to do is copy the code into a Web page and put this and the other required files (the Java applet and the panorama JPEG file) onto your site.

You can see the final panorama we created (Chalcot Square in north London) at **www.internet-magazine.com/panorama**, along with a couple of other fine examples. IM

From the original photos to the final panorama of Chalcot Square in north London

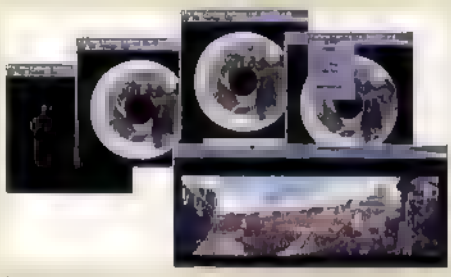
Other options

If taking loads of pictures and stitching them together doesn't sound like your idea of fun, there are other options for producing your panoramas

IPIX

The IPIX system takes a very different approach to panoramic photography. Instead of taking lots of pictures, you use a special lens on your camera and take only two pictures. Each picture covers a full 180° and the software included with the system stitches the two together to produce the panorama. One advantage of this is you get full 360° coverage in all directions, so users can scroll up and down as well as left and right. The special lens works with a range of digital cameras. We'll be doing a full review of this system in next month's issue.
Cost *£700+ (including digital camera)*
Contact *IPIX*
www.ipix.com

The IPIX system uses a special lens on a digital camera to create panoramas from two images



BeHere

The BeHere system takes this one step further, giving a full 360° panorama from a single image. This is done with a combination of a special lens on a 35mm or digital camera and software that takes the scanned image and transforms it into a panorama. It's an excellent, top quality system, but it's not cheap – the special lens will cost you around £170 to hire for a day or £3,750 to buy.
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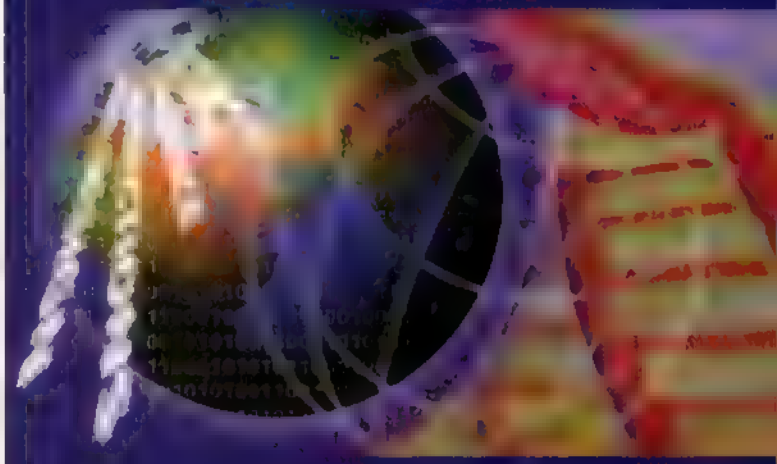

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Who's looking at your Web site?

Logfile analysis tells you who's visiting your Web site. Neil Redding tells you why analysis of statistics is vital if you're hoping to attract advertisers or paying customers

You've spent many long hours and bleary-eyed nights perfecting your Web site. You might have a simple home page with photos of you and your mates down the pub, or a 100-page professional masterpiece. You'll still want to know who's looking at your site.

The problem is, nothing short of username and password authentication gives you any real idea of people's identity, and there's still no guarantee that the personal data given is true. Besides, most of us don't put up with entering passwords unless we're getting something really exciting in return.

But fortunately, for those of you intent on analysis and concerned with privacy, there are still many useful bits of information on Web servers, and many ways to interpret the data.

What you can watch

Every time a Web server receives a request from a browser, a hit is generated and logged by the server. The hit is the most basic unit of logged activity, and contains lots of information which, when analysed intelligently, can give you an important insight into the browsing habits of your visitors. Your Web server can record all this information (and possibly more) about each request:

- Date and time of request
- Name of the requesting host (such as superbad.com)
- The document requested
- The server's response code (such as the dreaded 404 error alert)
- Referer (name of the referring host, if the browser generated the request via a link on another site)
- The visitor's login name (if authenticated)
- The visitor's IP address and host (if the IP address can be resolved)
- Number of bytes transferred
- Path of the served file
- Cookies sent by the visitor's browser and by the Web server

Let's start by looking at how many visitors your site receives on a particular day. If your site requires visitors to log in, it couldn't be easier – count the number of logins, remove the duplicates and you're done. But most sites are more complicated than this.

First, let's clarify the difference between hits, page retrievals, visits and visitors. A hit is a request for a single file – it could be an HMTL document, a GIF, or any number of other things. So a single page retrieval can generate many hits – often a dozen or more, and it varies from page to page. A visitor often requests many pages in a single visit.

So how do we translate the hit data into visitor statistics?

Basic hit analysis

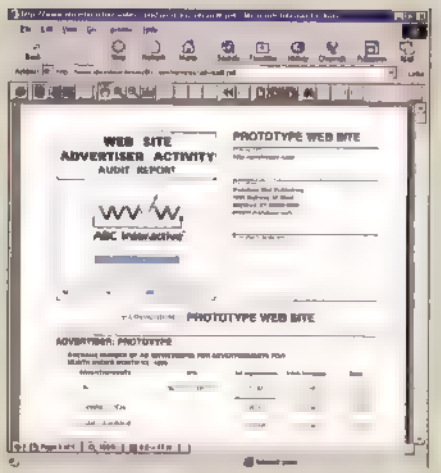
At first, you might think counting unique IP addresses would give you an accurate visitor count. At least we wouldn't ➤

An industry standard: ABC Interactive

The Audit Bureau of Circulations has been providing buyers of print media advertising with audited audience statistics for most of this century. So it's not surprising that it's decided to provide auditing services for the Web as well.

The main aim of ABC Interactive (**www.abcinteractiveaudits.com**) is the definition of industry-wide standards for the measurement of advertising effectiveness on the Web. To this end, ABC defines the featured components of its reports – the page impression and the visit – with extreme precision.

A visit, for instance, is "a series of interactions by a visitor with a site without 30 consecutive minutes of inactivity". Other concepts, such as click-through, ad impression and non-qualifying activity (hits generated internally by your company, for example), are also well defined. ABC compares your logfiles and internal statistics with its own observations of user activity on your Web site.



ABC statistics are highly respected in traditional print media advertising

Monitoring software runs in a separate process on your Web server, recording activity into a tamper-resistant database and uploading it to ABC periodically. The firm claims performance impact is negligible and that no maintenance is required once the software is installed.

The result is a report that uses the same terms, regardless of whether it's describing click-throughs from Yahoo! to Amazon or from The Guardian to Irn-Bru. This makes things much easier for potential advertisers on your site, as well as for your own staff. You'll be given a certificate which says your results have been verified, and as the ABC is a non-profit industry organisation, the cost is minimal.

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www.easyspace.com

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They also include a host of other freebies with your domain including FREE Frontpage

Extensions offering full support to the Microsoft Frontpage software packages.

Bandwidth - Easyspace have their servers connected straight onto a 155Mbs connection - that's a Ferrari compared to a Fiat 500 (2Mbs line).

How To Apply

Go to the Easyspace web site at http://www.easyspace.co.uk and select the service you require. If you are registering a new domain name check the availability through their FREE facility. Select the click here to register button and you will then be taken to an online form. Now fill in your details on the online form. Make sure you enter your email address correctly since this is where your account instructions will be sent. Press the submit button and this will take you to their secure payments area which is housed within a banking environment under the care of National Westminster Bank plc the UKs largest Bank. Check the details on the payment form are correct for the credit card you are using and press the submit button. And that's all you have to do. There is a similar system online for transferring a domain and remember Easyspace host domains for people in over 200 countries.

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count hits or page retrievals as visitors. Still, a large percentage of browsers, and nearly everyone using the Net at home, has a temporary IP address assigned to them for the duration of their online session.

Your host uses dynamic address allocation to maximise the limited number of IP addresses it's allowed to use. So counting unique IP addresses will produce an artificially low visitor count – the same address could be used by many different visitors over the course of a day. They might be in an Internet café or all be CompuServe subscribers, for instance.

Remember that, once the search engines, bots (programs used to perform repetitive functions, such as searching for information) and other Web crawling entities discover your server, they'll keep your hit count high without you getting any actual visitors.

Cookies

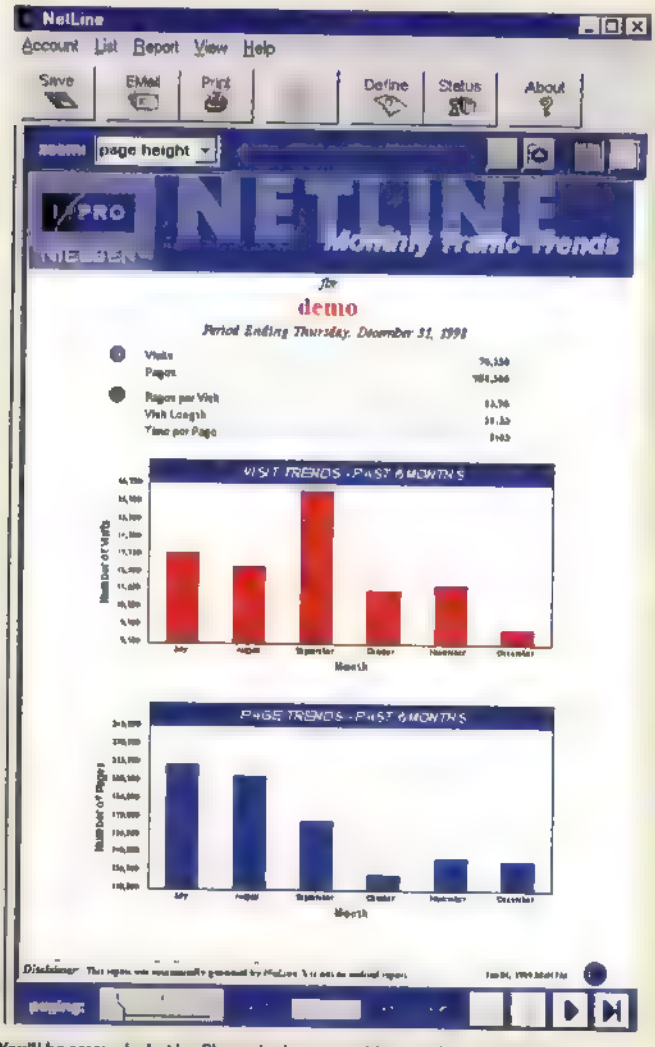
Enter the cookie. When it was introduced several years ago, the cookie alarmed many privacy advocates by saving personal data on the browser's machine and returning it to the server whenever the browser returned to the cookie's originating site. While cookies can certainly be used for evil purposes, they're mostly put to good use, saving only a unique alphanumeric ID, which effectively becomes a computer ID.

What this means is the cookie provides a reliable way for you to count the number of times a specific computer – and therefore, in most cases, a specific person – visits your server. It acts as a sort of anonymous login, and unique computers can be identified. This assumes that your visitor's browser accepts cookies – most give people the option to refuse them.

Online auditing systems

Here are two online analysis and auditing services – one that claims the vast majority of Web audited reports and one that doesn't

The dominant service is from I/PRO, which is affiliated with Nielsen, the primary ratings company for the US and Canadian broadcast media. The company has some huge customers, including Dell, Excite and Infoseek. It doesn't mention prices on its site (it's probably proportional to traffic), but we reckon most I/PRO customers choose it because it's a service that handles the analysis for you.



You'll be amazed what logfile analysis can provide you with. NetLine focuses on traffic measurement

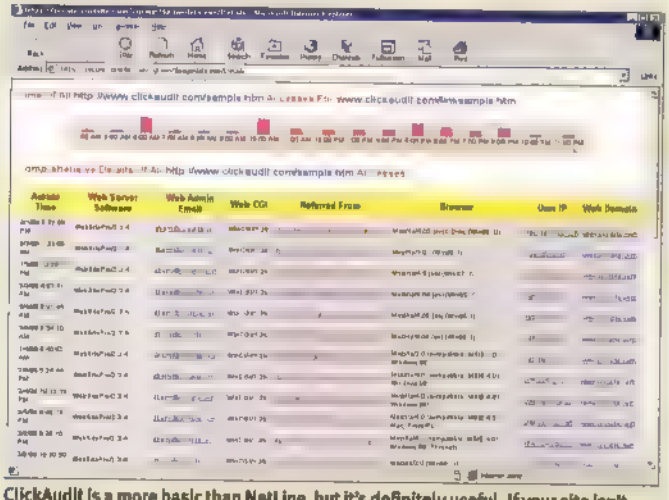
You can outsource your traffic analysis, and receive up to 16 daily, weekly and monthly reports, all of which should be useful. Visitor profiles, summaries, trends and path tracking are all covered, and you can customise your reports.

All this is featured in the NetLine service, which focuses on traffic measurement. The I/AUDIT service, which is compliant with the Internet Advertising Bureau's (www.iab.net) measurement guidelines, provides clear, standardised auditing of your site's activity. I/PRO says 70 per cent of Web ad revenues go to sites using I/PRO services. A simple and less expensive version of the audit is also available. TopLine will give you general usage statistics, but doesn't support the demographic profiles and deeper data of the full service.

The other online auditing service is ClickAudit (www.clickaudit.com). It's a simple, lowbrow service, but the monthly cost is about the same as a pint of Guinness and a packet of crisps. For $5 (around £3) a month, ClickAudit will track your site's traffic and give you basic statistics that you can access via the Web.

No access to your logfiles is needed – it's not truly a real audit. The statistics are generated in real time, and include the basics, such as total page accesses per day, the IP addresses of the top 10 visitors, the top 10 browsers used (a little strange), and the URLs of the top four pages visited on your site.

You can also view the standard details for each page access. It's not configurable though – the interface consists of basic HTML tables, and you can get this information from any number of free analysis tools. But ClickAudit might still suit your needs, particularly if your site only attracts a small amount of traffic.



ClickAudit is a more basic than NetLine, but it's definitely useful. If your site isn't attracting the hordes yet, it's good value for money

While it's relatively common for multiple people to use the same computer for browsing, it's also common for one person to use multiple computers to access the same sites – usually from home and work – so the numbers tend to balance themselves out.

All of which means you've got a fairly accurate method for calculating the number of visitors on a particular day. First, count the number of authenticated users (if any), then count the cookies, and then the number of unique IP addresses, if there are any hits remaining. There's bound to be some margin of error, given all the variables, but you should still find the data useful.

Why should I care?

If you've got a non-commercial site, you might just be curious about the statistics about your visitors. But if you're expecting to attract advertisers, and particularly if you're expecting to attract paying customers, this information is absolutely vital.

Advertisers demand to know the audience they're paying to reach. You can charge more for advertising if you can prove the size of your audience. And if you're a successful company, you'll want to know exactly how your Web presence affects the bottom line, whether you're selling goods and services online or just providing enticing content.

There are other things you might want to track besides the number of visitors per day. Useful statistics include the average duration of visits, popularity of a particular page or group of pages, and the average frequency of visits. All these will help you to improve your site, making it better suited to your visitors' needs and desires, and therefore more profitable for you.

How to do it

There are many ways to collect and analyse Web server statistics. You can either inspect your log files with a text editor, write your own Perl scripts to sift and sort through them, buy an analysis program, or pay a third party to do an official audit. It depends how much effort and money you're willing to commit to it, and the depth and complexity of analysis you need.

If you've already got a performance analysis and reporting setup going for your site, you'll probably want to go choose a package that'll pump server activity data into your database, rather than one that merely maintains separate logs. Remember to check your existing system first – some Web servers (such as Microsoft's SiteServer) are already capable of doing this.

Check out the boxes on these pages if you want the security and authority of an outside auditor, for solutions that'll suit you if you're into DIY. im

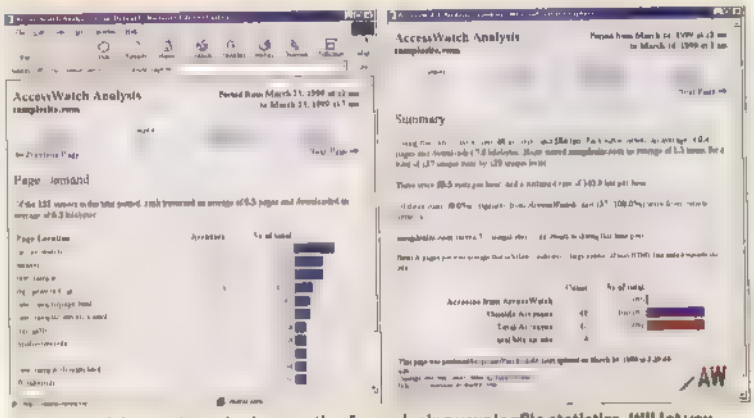
Logfile analysis solutions

Many of the free analysis tools are written in Perl – a common scripting language for server platforms. If you're up for a bit of tinkering, check out the article on writing your own scripts for logfile analysis at www.zdnet.com/devhead/stories/articles/0,4413,2144889,00.html. Alternatively, check out the popular CreateStats at www.bprc.mps.ohio-state.edu/usage/CreateStats.html.

AccessWatch

Extremely cheap ($25 US, around £15) for an individual licence. AccessWatch is a popular Perl-based tool which runs on almost every server. It provides all the basics and is easy to live with. A 30-day trial version is available.

www.accesswatch.com

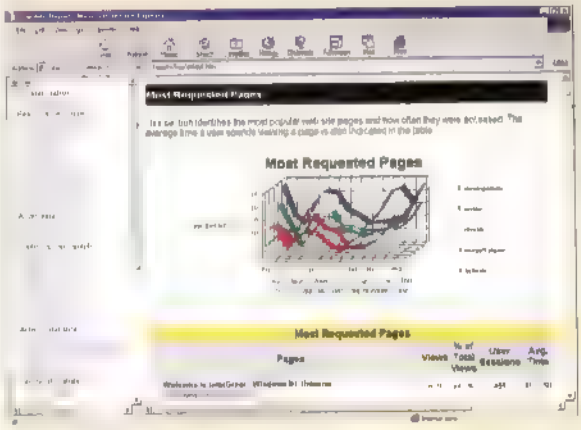


AccessWatch is an extremely cheap option for analysing your logfile statistics. It'll let you discover which are your most popular pages, the number of hits made on different days, and how visitors accessed your site

WebTrends

Fast and scalable, easy to install, slick and provides surprisingly useful reports. This makes WebTrends the most impressive traffic analysis tool we've seen, in terms of price and performance. For $399 (around £245), you can discover the most popular and least popular pages – top entry and exit pages – as well as errors,and top referring sites and search engines. With a free trial version available, you absolutely must try this effective tool.

www.webtrends.com



WebTrends will tell you the most popular pages, as well as the sites that send people running away in the opposite direction

Andromedia Aria

Winner of awards for best traffic analysis tool, this is the cream of the crop – arguably the most expensive and comprehensive package you can buy. It's an expensive option, and beyond the reach of most small sites (contact Andromedia for pricing), but larger sites with 150 million hits per day can use Aria to do real-time reporting on usage data and content analysis. It requires Sun Solaris 2.6 – a real, robust operating system – but you'll get ultimate performance and reliability with this option.

www.andromedia.com

These analysis tools should get you started. To find out more, check out http://ipw.internet.com/analysis/index.html for a comprehensive list of packages.

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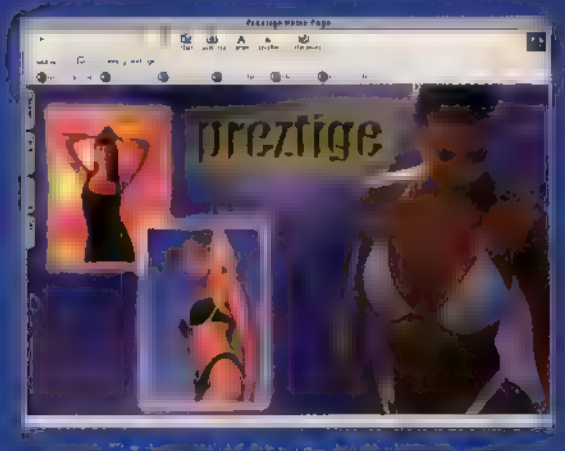

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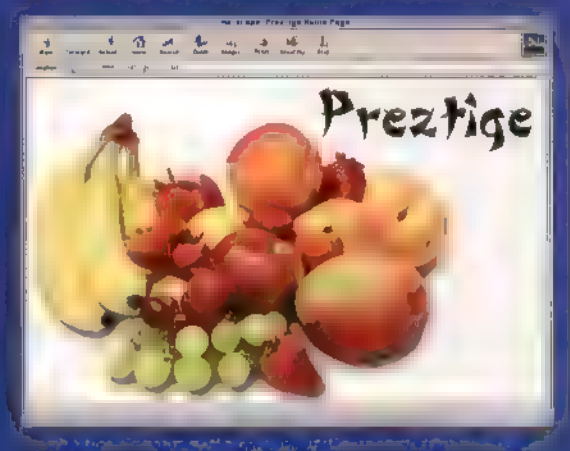

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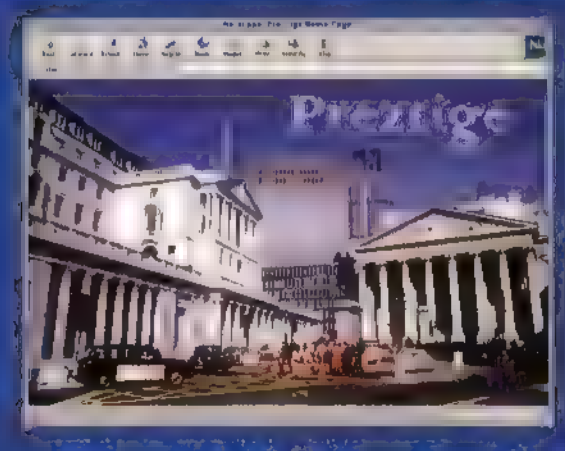

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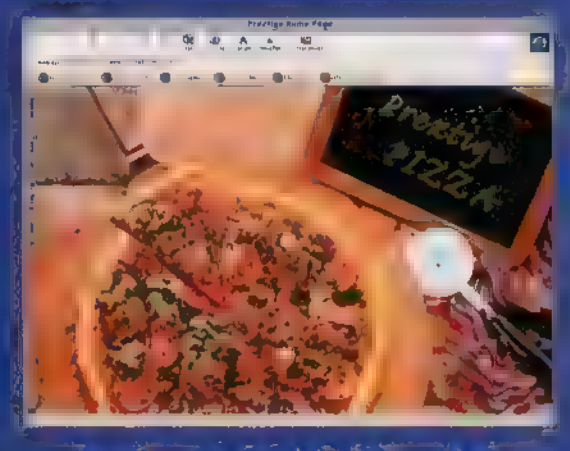

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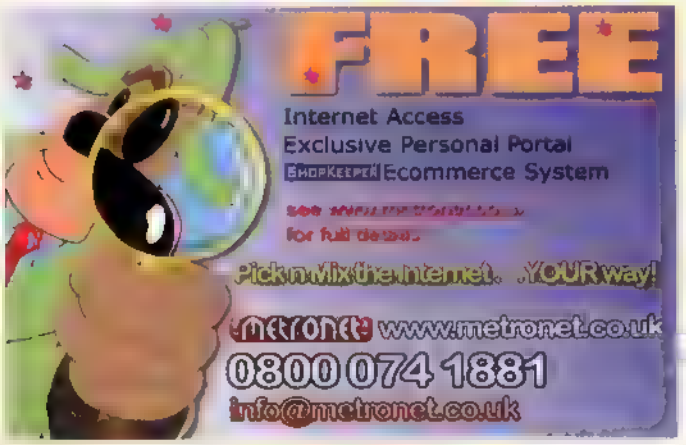

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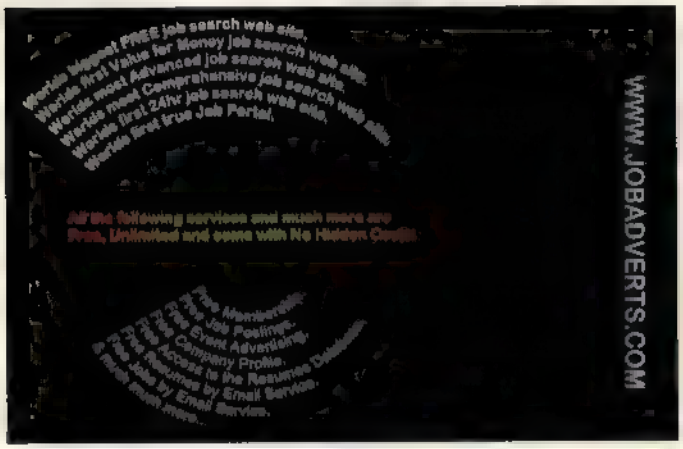

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The *Internet Magazine* ISP Lab tests put UK's top service providers through a rigorous set of performance tests. Find out how your provider scored in our exclusive tests. Turn to page 142 to find out which ISP wins our award for most consistent performance over the last six months

The winner

This month's ISP of the month is REDNET, based in High Wycombe. The ISP has just become a member of LINX (the London Internet Exchange) and LoNAP (the London Access Point)

REDNET claims to have around 400Mb of connectivity to these exchanges, where the UK and international ISPs exchange data. This seems to have helped REDNET's Web access speed, helping it to climb from fourth place in last month's tests and from 26th place in March.

As usual, it's a close-fought thing, with numerous other providers challenging for the top spot. Despite its number one position, REDNET didn't achieve the fastest Web speed in the tests – that honour goes to DNA Internet Services, with an average speed of 12.29 seconds. DNA was let down by its availability of 94.74 per cent, meaning around one in 20 of our test calls failed to connect.

Several other ISPs were within sight of the award, including Inweb and last month's winners CIX. Intonet also climbs up the table from last month's 45th place to fifth place this time around.

ISP OF THE MONTH

REDNET

Free ISPs drop down the tables

The performance of the free ISPs continues to be problematic. Freeserve is in 92nd place this month, with a disappointing 75.86 per cent availability rating.

Freeserve's Web speed was also poor and well below average at 21.03 seconds. ConnectFREE had poor availability and Web speed, while Cable & Wireless remains largely unchanged in 38th place. The only free ISP that seems to be improving is BT ClickFree, which climbs up to 36th place from an appalling 113th place last month.

Meanwhile, Virgin Net (which has just gone free) has fallen down to 101st place. Which? Online has also dropped, to 104th place – not a good place to be when there are only 104 providers in the tests. Both ISPs use the NTL backbone and they both experienced disastrous Web access speeds this month, despite 100 per cent availability.

Testing problems

The sharper-eyed among you might have noticed that the number of ISPs in the tests has fallen this month. We've tested the results of 104 ISPs this month, while 113 providers were tested in April. There are two reasons for this.

First, we've encountered problems with the dial-up accounts that we use for several ISPs this month. We were unable to access their services because they wouldn't let us onto their systems. These included Paradise Internet Network Services and Cheapnet.

Secondly, we're still having problems with some ISPs that use proxy caching systems that are incompatible with our testing system. These include Pipemedia, Popte. and Easynet. The problems meant we were able to gain access to their systems, but we were unable to access their Web pages.

We're working to deal with both of these problems and we'll be putting these ISPs back into these tests as soon as possible.

Please note that the absence of these ISPs does not imply that they are at fault in any way, and you should not draw any negative conclusions from their absence from the tests.

Uppers & downers

▲ DNA INTERNET SERVICES
Up 94 places to 4th place
Good performance due to DNA's improvements in both availability and Web speed

▲ BT CLICKFREE
Up 77 places to 36th place
A vast improvement for BT's call charge only ISP. The best performing free provider

▼ FIRSTNET
Down 57 places to 90th place
A combination of availability and Web speed means a poor month for Firstnet

▼ WHICH? ONLINE
Down 45 places to 104th place
Bottom of the pile – perfect availability but a hugely disappointing Web speed

The averages

This month's average availability of all the providers in the tests was 94.01 per cent, largely unchanged from last month's figure of 93.89 per cent.

It's worth noting that this month saw an impressive 44 ISPs achieving a 100 per cent availability figure, meaning encountered no problems during the testing period. The relatively low average was due to some particularly poor performances from other ISPs.

The overal. average Web speed this month was 18.92 seconds, very slightly down on last month's figure of 18.72 seconds.

The only ISP tests that count

The *Internet Magazine* ISP tests are based on proven scientific testing principles. We make sure we connect to each ISP many times – which means we make thousands of calls.

The results produced by this extensive testing are then processed, resulting in the test analysis and ranking figures you see in these pages. At every stage, the results are checked to make sure they are accurate.

Please remember that these tests are only designed to examine the availability and speed of an ISP – we don't test their prices or technical support. For the lowdown on the complete set of services provided by the top 30 ISPs, get hold of our gigantic ISP of the Year feature from our Faxback service on page 127.

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b tests

This month's best-performing ISPs, as tested in *Internet Magazine*'s labs

		REDNET	(01494) 513 333	100.00%	12 51	8 35	15 52	4 20
		nweb	(0845) 606 2014	100.00%	12 82	8.28	16 07	1 63
	19	nline Internet Services	(0800) 783 7499	97 83%	12 62	8.99	15 20	11 63
	98	DNA Internet Services	(01604) 670 717	94 74%	12 29	8.44	14 85	11 65
	45	ntonet	(0181) 941 9195	100.00%	13 15	7 95	16 56	11 92
	1	CIX	(0181) 255 5151	97.83%	12.83	9.14	15 49	11 70
	58	Interactive Web	(01926) 450 099	94 74%	12 52	7 82	13 47	18.04
	20	CompuServe	(0990) 000 200	100.00%	13.44	8 68	14 55	17 80
	11	Pavilion Internet	(01273) 607 072	100 00%	13 57	8 86	17 07	14 90
	30	Mistral Internet	(0800) 328 7253	97.83%	13 34	8 20	16.00	14 42
	59	NetDirect Internet	(0800) 731 3311	95 74%	13 11	9 24	15.94	11.86
	34	Technocom	(01753) 714 200	84 91%	11.89	8.43	14 03	11 75
	16	nternet Central	(01270) 611 000	100.00%	14 03	8.52	18 .6	11 95
	35	Netcom nternet	(0800) 980 9107	100.00%	14.04	9 31	16 50	4 97
	50	Global nternet	(0870) 909 8041	100.00%	14.07	10.03	15 20	17 33
	62	SoftProg NET	(0181) 788 0656	97 78%	13 95	8 06	17 28	13 54
	22	Pinnacle Internet	(01293) 613 686	100.00%	14 27	8 86	16.72	6.28
	40	ClaraNet	(0800, 358 2828	100.00%	14 35	9 56	16 37	16 48
	13	Nildram	(0800) 496 2903	100 00 %	14 53	8 36	18 47	13 91
	73	Prestel Online	(0990) 223 300	100.00%	14 59	8 87	18 38	13 70
	44	Wyenet	(01989) 762 476	100.00%	14 69	10.63	17 7,	11 53
	48	Sonnet nternet	(0171) 891 2000	100.00%	14 74	8.9	18 01	15 29
	54	WebLeicester	(0116) 223 0070	100.00%	14 79	9.41	18 12	14 02
	18	Frontier Internet Services	(0171) 536 9090	100.00%	14 79	8 56	18.36	5 19
	15	Freedom To Surf Plc	(0181) 881 2111	93.75%	13 93	9 15	17 37	2 49
	3	U-Net	(01925) 484 444	91.84%	13 66	7 99	17 81	1 78
	1	Direct Connection	(0800) 072 0000	100 00%	14 94	8 32	19 12	4 43
	6	Total Connectivity Providers	(01703) 571 300	100.00%	15 04	8.75	20 17	11 66
	21	BUNet (Pipex Dial)	(0500) 567 000	100.00%	15.08	8.94	16 68	20 27
	91	HiWay	(01635) 573 300	97.83%	14.87	9 18	17 26	17 43
	9	Mitsubishi	(0800) 226 600	93.62%	14 51	8.67	19 07	10 98
	24	Primex	(01908) 643 597	86.27%	13 33	8 16	17 09	1 71
	87	Cerbernet	(0171) 360 8000	100.00%	15 59	9.78	18 61	6 75
	27	Giffo d n ernet Services	(0117) 939 7722	97.83%	15 27	9 57	20.04	1 87
	91	Vossnet	(01753) 737 800	93 62 %	14 03	8 65	16 82	18 12
	113	BT C ckFree	(0800) 731 7867	100.00%	15 75	9.67	16 67	22 59
	42	Cable nternet	(0500) 500 100	84.62%	13.43	8.66	16 95	11 82
	7	nternet for Business	(01224) 333 370	94.74%	15 11	10 28	18.75	13 24
	28	Cable & Wireless Internet	(0800) 092 9001	100.00%	15.95	7 97	22 48	1. 62
	89	Eclipse Networking	(01392) 202 345	89.80%	14 39	8 60	18 77	12 5
	8	CableNet	(01424, 830 900	94.74%	15 38	8 58	19 53	5 17
	38	Cable & Wireless Internet Lite	(0800) 092 3001	100 00%	16.46	8 98	22 23	13.24
	58	Computalynx	(01604) 231 437	100 00%	16.49	9 85	20.93	15 35
		ENTANET	(0500) 368 263	94.74%	15 75	7 81	16 05	26 92
	23	Onyx Internet	(0345) 715 715	91.84%	15 37	10.06	16.82	19 69
	55	BT Internet	(0800) 800 001	95 56%	16.04	8.80	21 05	14 39
	5	UK Online	(01749) 333 333	100.00%	16.84	10 20	22 18	13.46
	67	PowerNet	(01908) 605 188	91.49%	15.45	8 34	21.02	12 22
	64	Aviators Network	(0700) 284 2867	90.00%	15.22	8 53	16.87	21 10
	95	Demon Internet	(0181) 371 1234	85 33%	14 52	8 78	16.03	19 37
	69	LondonWeb Communications	(0800) 026 8306	100.00%	17 04	8 24	16 60	3 13
	14	Moon ght nternet Services	(01276) 856 868	90.00%	15.44	12 15	16.23	18 38

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	46	Internet Discovery	01203, 364 400	100.00%	17.29	12.94	15.06	14.40
	39	Abel Internet	0131) 445 5555	100.00%	17.40	9.94	14.37	11.35
	140	Andover On-Line	01264) 334 822	100.00%	17.67	9.93	17.90	28.73
	104	Way	0171) 734 5734	100.00%	17.75	11.58	20.88	19.19
	39	nter@pha	(01703 369 200	100.00%	17.75	8.20	14.13	9.64
	72	NewNet	07000) 639 638	92.31%	16.65	9.83	16.06	18.35
	37	CommUnity Internet	01865) 856 000	100.00%	18.09	10.81	19.82	24.65
	34	FreeDotNet	0181) 938 3338	94.44%	17.34	18.10	19.07	11.88
	49	CYBERphile Internet	01543) 454 840	95.56%	17.60	9.41	14.39	27.92
	23	Legend Internet	01274) 743 500	97.83%	18.16	9.25	20.01	25.42
	96	Thames Global Internet services	01344, 641 627	93.48%	17.37	12.04	20.64	7.18
	17	Gemsoft	0114) 275 7070	85.71%	16.15	9.22	19.92	14.61
	45	AIC ENTANET	01279, 865 290	90.48%	17.08	8.16	14.98	35.69
		Wave Rider Internet	0121, 603 1888	94.74%	18.12	10.67	23.50	8.87
	48	WorldWide Web Services	0.784 898 800	100.00%	19.26	9.79	21.90	6.84
	78	East Midlands Network	0115, 956 8250	100.00%	19.47	10.50	17.96	30.68
	86		327 464	97.73%	19.10	9.61	16.81	14.05
	90	Cygnet Internet Services	0181) 880 4650	89.19%	17.56	9.53	22.74	10.62
	70	WSS Internet Access	01793) 420 764	100.00%	20.11	13.04	32.69	24.26
	101	Enterprise	01624) 677 666	89.80%	18.09	11.73	25.03	45.28
	76		21 922	81.48%	16.47	10.33	25.04	19.24
	98	Ideal Internet services	01942) 522 331	8.95	16.05	9.78	18.72	9.10
	59	Portland communications	0181 942 1115	00.00%	20.43	12.55	24.70	31.67
	66	Newgate communications	0121) 327 6633	73.7%	15.25	9.50	19.39	9.76
	93	Netkonect	0171) 345 7777	84.91%	18.16	10.28	20.35	24.56
	56	DIALNet	0800) 881 881	100.00%	22.17	8.40	32.1	7.99
	69	Newbury Internet	01635 569 123	40.00%	20.10	10.93	26.23	8.52
	108		0	0%	16.23	8.55	18.04	15.70
	89	Zoo Internet	0181) 961 7000	82.61%	18.92	11.25	22.57	21.40
	101	Metronet	0800) 074 1881	84.2%	19.28	11.54	26.22	13.56
	29	ProWeb	0500) 636 343	100.00%	23.74	9.06	33.68	8.49
	92	CM Netserv	0800) 614 581	97.83%	23.10	9.00	33.29	5.1
	68	Simnet	0800 745 547	85.71%	20.47	13.04	28.28	26.5
	98	Internet Alliance eXchange	0800, 052 0523	100.00%	24.20	8.16	17.34	5.4
	85	Free Online	0870 7061 504	74.44%	18.91	12.13	24.08	16.16
	107	TIA NET	0800 092 6070	89.80%	23.54	18.38	27.18	24.7
	38	FirstNet Services	0113, 294 4224	72.73%	18.97	8.63	21.43	28.31
	102	EntWeb	0800) 525 470	84.62%	23.44	19.15	26.70	21.3
	92	Freeserve	0990 1500 49	5.86%	21.03	3.02	27.99	5.65
	114	Baynet Internet	01222) 256 401	100.00%	29.41	10.15	30.45	80.73
	74	Intensive Networks	01672 [illegible]054	73.75%	27.93	8.69	43.66	7.01
	86	Connect FREE	0702 [illegible]2525	83.69%	24.80	18.65	28.93	9.72
	82	UK2Net	0171) 538 0253	85.71%	25.75	11.97	36.07	42.61
	110	INTERact	01753) 776 699	40.00%	30.98	48.64	21.20	3.45
	106	Telinco Internet Services	0800) 542 0800	81.82%	25.40	19.57	29.47	23.96
	99	The Internet Business	01232) 424 190	87.80%	28.90	12.88	38.14	54.82
	65	Dataflex	01252 810 081	100.00%	46.32	9.28	80.83	4.57
	99	Virgin Net	0500 558 800	100.00%	55.59	8.52	20.80	213.16
	109	Surflink	0181 903 2777	86.67%	48.80	14.21	43.06	1.56
	105	Northants Computer Centre	01604, 622539	92.31%	53.01	22.79	54.93	18.56
		Which? Online	0645) 830 [illegible]	100.00%	[illegible]	10.19	[illegible]	267.35

How the performance tests work

The *Internet Magazine* provider lab tests are designed to give you all the information you need on the speed and availability of Internet Service Providers. Every month, our testing system accesses each of the ISPs on the list many times. Our system repeatedly checks:

- The availability of the ISPs. How easy is it to make the connection? How often are all of their modems engaged?
- The speed of the connection. How long do a number of popular Web pages take to download?

We're now testing access speeds to 20 popular Web pages situated around the world. We only print the summary results in these pages, but you can see the full details of the tests (including the results for each of the individual pages) on our Web site at **www.internet-magazine.com/isp/tests**

To rank the ISPs, we calculate the geometric mean of the availability and their average Web performance. This figure is then used to place the ISPs in order of overall performance.

These two results are given equal weighting, so a provider with below average availability but above average Web speed could come higher in the rankings than one with 100 per cent availability but slower access speeds.

- This month's tests ran over the period 10-29 March 1999.

How the ISPs performed over the past six months

Find out how your service provider has done in our unique chart...

Provider	Phone	URL
REDNET	(01494) 513 333	www.rednet.net
CIX	0181) 255 5151	www.cix.co.uk
Technocom	(01753) 714 200	www.technocom.net
CompuServe	0990) 000 200	www.compuserve.co.uk
Pipex	(01908, 643 597	www.pipex.co.uk
Direct Connection	(0117) 939 7722	www.gifford.co.uk
UUNet Pipex Services	(0800) 783 7499	www.uunet.co.uk
Total Connectivity Providers	(01703) 571 300	www.tcp.co.uk
Freeserve	(0181) 881 2141	www.freeserve.net
Direct Connection	0800) 072 0000	www.dircon.net
Cityscape	(0181, 941 9195	www.cityscape.co.uk
Personal Communications	(0181) 942 1115	www.pcnl.co.uk
Computer Connections	(0800, 026 8306	www.cableweb.net
PowerNet	(0908) 605 188	www.powernet.co.uk
Interactive Web	(01926) 450 099	www.wwwork.net
UUNet Pipex Dial	0500) 567 000	www.uk.uu.net
Nildram	0800) 496 2903	www.nildram.net
Hotcom Internet Services	(0171) 536 9090	www.hotcom.co.uk
CYBERphile Internet	(01543) 454 840	www.cyberphile.co.uk
Sonnet Internet	(0171) 891 2000	www.sonnet.co.uk
Global Internet	(0870) 909 8041	www.global.net.uk
WyeNet	(01989) 762 476	www.wye.net.co.uk
Freeserve Online	(0990, 223 300	www.freeserve.co.uk
Global Internet Services	(01942, 522 333	www.global.net.co.uk
NetDirect Internet	(0800) 731 3311	www.netdirect.net.uk
Mistral Internet	0800) 328 7253	www.mistral.co.uk
SoftPro.NET	018.) 788 0656	www.softpro.net
SARA Network Services	(0800) 358 9000	www.sara.nl.uk
CamNET	(0800) 358 2828	www.camnet.co.uk
Cable Internet	(0500, 500 100	www.cable.net.co.uk
Demon Network Business	(01224) 333 370	www.db.net
Cybernetic Internet	(01865) 856 000	www.cybernetic.net.uk
Gemsoft	0114) 275 7070	www.gemsoft.net
NetConnect	(0171, 345 7777	www.netconnect.co.uk
Powweb	0845) 606 2014	www.powweb.net.uk
Mondial Internet Services	(01276) 856 868	www.mondial.net.co.uk
FreeBorNet	0181) 938 3338	www.freebornet.net
Internet Central	01270, 611 000	www.internetcentral.co.uk
CableNet	(01424) 830 900	www.cablenet.net
NewNet	(07000) 639 638	www.newnet.co.uk/home
EMINET	(0115) 956 8260	www.eminet.co.uk
BT Internet	(0800) 731 7887	www.btclickfree.com
Netcom Internet	(0800) 980 9107	www.netcom.net.uk
BT Internet	0800) 800 001	www.btinternet.com
DNA Internet Services	(01604) 670 717	www.dna-is.com
VossNet	(01753) 737 800	www.vossnet.co.uk
Pavilion Internet	(01273) 607 072	www.pavilion.co.uk
Legend Internet	(01274) 743 500	www.legend.co.uk
1 Way	(0171) 734 5734	www.1way.co.uk
FirstNet	(0113) 294 4224	www.firstnet.co.uk
Internet Alpha	(01703) 363 200	www.internetalpha.net
UUNet	(01925) 484 444	www.uunet.net
Atlantic Internet	(0131) 445 5555	www.atlantic.co.uk
WSS Internet Access	(01793, 420 764	www.wss.co.uk
Webleicester	(0116) 223 0070	www.webleicester.co.uk
ProWeb	(0500) 636 343	www.proweb.co.uk
Onyx Internet	(0345) 715 715	www.onyxnet.co.uk
H Way	(01635, 573 300	www.hway.co.uk
Andover Online	(01264, 334 822	www.andover.co.uk
Thames Global Internet Services	(01344) 641 627	www.tgis.co.uk
Internet Advance Exchange	(0800) 052 0523	www.tx.net
DIAL net	0800. 881 881	www.dialnet.com
Anglia Net	(01473) 211 922	www.angliant.co.uk
Aviators Network	0700, 284 2867	www.aviators.net
Compulynx	(01604) 231 437	www.compulynx.co.uk
Line One	(0345) 777 464	www.lineone.net
UK Online	(01749) 333 333	www.ukonline.co.uk
Intensive Networks	(01672) 511 054	www.intensive.net
Newbury Internet	(01635) 569 123	www.newbury.net
Cygnet Internet Services	(0181) 880 4650	www.cygnet.co.uk
The Internet Business	(01232) 424 190	www.tibus.net
UK2NET	(0171) 538 0253	www.uk2.net.com
Cable & Wireless Internet	(0800) 092 9001	www.wcom.net
Dialnet	(01252) 810 081	www.dialnet.co.uk
TaiNet	0800) 092 6070	www.tainet.com
Demon Internet	(0181) 371 1234	www.demon.net
Cerbernet	(0171) 360 8000	www.cerbernet.co.uk
Zoo Internet	(0181, 961 7000	www.zoo.co.uk
Bayne	(01222, 256 401	www.bayne.co.uk
Enterprise	(01624) 677 666	www.enterprise.net
Telcom Internet Services	(0800) 542 0800	www.telcom.net
Worldwide Web Services	(01784) 898 800	www.webs.co.uk
Virgin Net	(0500) 558 800	www.virgin.net
MetroNet	(0800) 074 1881	www.metronet.co.uk
EntWeb	(0800) 525 470	www.entweb.co.uk
Which? Online	0645) 830 240	www.which.net
Newgate Communications	0121) 327 6633	www.newgate.co.uk
INTERact	(01753) 776 699	www.interact.net.uk
Surflink	(0181) 903 2777	www.surflink.co.uk
Northants Computer Centre	(01604) 622539	www.nccnet.co.uk

Top performers in the past six months

As well as our normal tests, every month we produce a table showing how the ISPs have performed over the past six months. This table is created from the figures produced over the last six months of our tests. We take our data from availability and Web access speeds and produce an average. The table only includes ISPs that have been in our tests for the past six months. Many providers have only recently joined our tests, so they're not included here. An ISP isn't poor if it's not included in this table – it might not have been included in our regular tests over the full six-month period.

The results

This month, 91 providers have qualified for our six-month listings, with Pinnacle Internet once again edging into the top spot.

REDNET is in second place for the second month running – its ISP of the month performance wasn't quite enough to push it to the top. This goes to show how important consistency is in these tests – although Pinnacle have never come top in the tests, it's been performing consistently well over the last six months, and that's what counts in these tests. Other strong performances this month include CIX, CompuServe and Direct Connection – all of these ISPs have had a string of good results over the past few months. UUnet, meanwhile, remains unchanged in 16th place, which largely mirrors its position in the monthly test results.

At the bottom, Northants Computer Centre, Surflink and INTERact are non-movers, while Which? Online drops down the table due to its poor performance in this month's tests.

Remember, these tests aren't calculated from the ISP's position in the monthly tables, but on the availability and Web speed data collected from six months of testing.

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pick a prov

The most up to date information is vital when you're choosing from the hundreds of Internet service providers, and you'll find no better guide than the next six pages of our Pick a Provider section. From free ISPs through to leased line providers, you'll find them all here...

Quik Internet franchises launched

Fresh from its success in the US, Quik Internet is the first Internet franchise organisation to set up shop in the UK and Eire. The ISP provides Internet services around the world by franchising provider packages to different areas.

"The future depends on the Net. We offer UK citizens a chance to capitalise on that," says Terry McQuitty, MD of Quik Internet UK. The business model has done well internationally, from the Americas to the Antipodes. "You don't have to be a computer guru to own and maintain a franchise," he adds.

The service is powered by an industrial grade server and has already attracted interest. The North East (**www.ne.quik.co.uk**), Edinburgh (**www.eh.quik.co.uk**) and Leicester (**www.le.quik.co.uk**) have already been taken.

If you fancy your chances, or want to save your ISP from too much competition, why not try it? **www.uk.quik.com**

UUNET improves its European service

UUNET has announced a major expansion of its global Internet access infrastructure, including new European Dial Access Network (EuroDAN) services. The ISP will be introducing global dial-up business services under the UDial brand.

UUNET has installed around 50,000 extra European modem ports in 11 European countries, taking its total to over one million.

The expansion marks the first step in UUNET's plan to offer global companies the chance to have one ISP account for all their offices, instead of separate accounts spread across the world. **www.uunet.com**

News in brief

Breathe Net has reduced charges on calls to its technical support service. The ISP has also pulled its site offline for redevelopment. You can get info at this new URL: **www.timetobreathe.net**

Frontier Internet Services has finished its redesign which looks stylish and well organised. **www.frontier-internet.ltd.uk**

CallNet has a new technical support number – (0906) 690 3300. It's 50p a minute and only available from 8am to 8pm. **www.callnetuk.com**

Freeserve has signed a deal with Associated New Media to secure access to the UK Plus search engine (**www.ukplus.com**) and Soccernet (**www.soccernet.com**). **www.freeserve.net**

Cable and Wireless has teamed up with the Norwich & Peterborough Building Society to market the services of both companies. The building society's customers will all be sent an InternetLite CD, which promotes N&P's online banking service. **www.cwcom.net**

And finally... if you're missing the News at Ten, CompuServe has teamed up with ITN to provide up to the minute news for members. **www.compuserve.co.uk**

If you've got any ISP news or want to be included in our listings or ISP tests, email us at providers@internet.emap.com

New ISPs this month

This month sees another rush of bandwagon jumpers.

Yes, more free ISPs are offering, well, similar things really. First up is Tiny Computers, with Tiny Online. You don't have to pay anything, but you'll get five email addresses and 15Mb of Web space. All new Tiny PCs will come pre-loaded with the service, making it quick and easy to get online. Previous customers will have to visit one of the company's 91 showrooms to get a CD. **www.tinyonline.net**

Computer companies starting their own free ISPs is one thing, but marketing agencies? Well, they should be better at customer service. Watch this space because London-based marketing firm FreewayUK.com, in conjunction with World CallNet (**www.callnetuk.com**), will soon launch its own free ISP. The service provides 15Mb, the usual five emails and some questionable home page GIF animation. The marketing agency deals mainly with retailers and mail order enterprises, advising them on Web-based promotional and loyalty possibilities. **www.freewayuk.com**

Next on the list of converts is Beacon, a Christian organisation and access provider. Not a bad idea – after all, they have far more potential customers than, say, Tesco! Membership comes with 20Mb of Web space, but no mention of email addresses. **www.beaconuk2.org**

Finally, David Sullivan, the man behind the *Daily Sport* and *Sunday Sport*, is launching an ISP for people who enjoy adult material. The service, Solarnet, will be managed by Gold Star, who are responsible for numerous adult sites and The Sport Online. **www.solarnet.co.uk**

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The most comprehensive listing of UK Internet service providers

Name	Phone	Email	Web page	Technical support	Cost (pm)	Backbone
Online Content Providers (you have to pay for content)						
AOL	0800) 279 1234	queryuk@aol.com	www.aol.co.uk	7.45-10.30 Mon-Fri / 9.00-17.30 Sat	from £4.95	AOL
CompuServe	0990) 000 200	customerservice@compuserve.co.uk	www.compuserve.co.uk	8.00-midnight every day	from £6.50	CompuServe
LineOne	0345 777 464	[illegible]	[illegible]	8.00-22.00 Mon-Sat 10.00-22.00 Sun	£4.95	BTnet
MSN	0345) 002 000	ukweb@microsoft-contact.co.uk	www.ukmsn.com	24 hours a day	from £4.95	JUNET
Which? On-line	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£[illegible]	NTnet
Free Internet services (all you pay is the cost of the phone calls)						
Bigwig.net	0870) 740 1033	info@bigwig.net	www.bigwig.net	24 hours a day	free	Telewest/Tele Global C&W
BT Clickfree	0800) 73 7887	[illegible]	www.btclickfree.com	8.00-midnight	free	BTnet
Cable & Wireless	0800) 092 3001	[illegible]	www.cwcom.net	24 hours a day	free	Cable & Wireless
CallNet	017 335 8300	[illegible]	www.callnet.com	24 hours a day	free	Cable & Wireless
Connect Free	0702 115 2525	[illegible]	www.connectfree.net	email only	free	Telewest
Free-Online	087 [illegible]	sales@free-online.net	www.free-online.net	7.00-23.00 every day	free	Energis
Freaknet	0[illegible]	[illegible]	www.freaknet.co.uk	24 hours a day	free	Cable & Wireless
FreeDotNet	0181) 938 3338	info@thefree.net	www.thefree.net	9.30-20.00 Mon & Thurs/ 9.30-17.30 Tues Wed Fri	free	Worldcom
Freeserve	0990 [illegible]	[illegible]	www.freeserve.net	24 hours a day	free	Energis
FreeUK	0900) 900 0900	cservices@freeuk.net	www.freeuk.net	24 hours a day	free	Colt Internet
Freeuse Internet	087 [illegible]	[illegible]	www.freeuse.co.uk	9.00-23.00 every day	free	Telnet
Internet Alliance Exchange	0800) 052 0523	info@iax.net	www.iax.net	8.00-20.00 Mon-Fri 9.00-13.00 Sat-Sun	free	NTL Internet
Sniff Out	0906 696 3345	[illegible]	www.sniffout.net	24 hours a day	free	Cable & Wireless
TeleoNet	0845) 605 0200	[illegible]	www.[illegible].co.uk	24 hours a day	free	Bnet
The Mail	none	[illegible]	www.themail.co.uk	none	free	NTL Internet
UK Fantastic	0702 10 44[illegible]	[illegible]	www.ukfantastic.net	24 Hours	free	[illegible]
Virgin Net	0500 558 800	advice@virgin.net	www.virgin.net	24 hours a day	free	NTL Internet
X Stream	0870) 730 6466	info@x-stream.com	www.x-stream.com	24 hours a day	free	COLT Internet
Service providers offering full UK coverage						
4theNET Internet	0870 787 9106	sales@4thenet.co.uk	www.4thenet.co.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£3.99	Arena
AAP Internet	18[illegible]	[illegible]	www.aap.co.uk	10.30-19.00 Mon-Sat 14.00-18.00 Sun	£[illegible]	Nildram
Abel Internet	13 445 5555	[illegible]	www.abel.net.uk	09.00-23.00 every day	£8.85	Quay Road
Ace Internet	0705) 066 7423	sales@ace-internet.co.uk	www.ace-internet.co.uk	24 hours a day	£11.99	Netkonect
ACONET	17[illegible]	[illegible]	www.aconet.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£[illegible]	Nildram
Adept	01843 8[illegible]	[illegible]	www.adept[illegible].uk	9.00-17.[illegible] Mon-Fri	£1.75	Wisper
AIC	01279) 865 290	entanet@aic.co.uk	www.aic.co.uk/entanet	9.00-18.00 Mon-Sat	£8.80	VBCnet
Alnwick Internet Access	01665 [illegible]	[illegible]	www.aia.me.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£5.27	Il Nil Murphy Holmes
Alnetcom	01254 [illegible]	enquiries@alnetcom.co.uk	www.alnetcom.co.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£[illegible].74	Bnet
Anglo Internet	01243 [illegible]	[illegible]	www.anglonet.co.uk	09.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£[illegible]	UUNET
Atlas Internet	171 312 5400	[illegible]	www.atlas.net.uk	24 hours a day	£11.75	Atlas
Aviatour Network	70 284 2867	[illegible]	www.aviators.net	24 hours a day	£11.75	GX Networks
Baynet	[illegible]	[illegible]	www.baynet.co.uk	8.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	NTL
Beacon Internet Services	01749) 831 056	sales@thebeacon.co.uk	www.thebeacon.co.uk	8.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£9.50	NetOnline
Blue Chip	[illegible] 232 0801	[illegible]	www.bchip.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£15	Planet Online
Boots Internet	01462 743 112	support@boots.com	www.boots.com	9.00-22.00 Mon-Fri	£12.75	VBCnet

Key: LL – leased line ISDN – ISDN BDU – Business Dial-Up

How to choose a service provider

Where to start

Most service providers let you connect to the Net for the price of a local phone call and this is an important factor in your choice. ISPs use systems run by companies such as BT, Energis and Mercury, where the phone number starts with 0345, 0645 or 0845.

Now look at how the providers charge for their services. There are free access providers, but most ISPs charge a flat fee for unlimited use of the Net. Other companies (such as AOL, MSN and CompuServe) have their own content and charge for the time you're online. They have options that give you three or five hours online. Once you exceed this figure you're charged at an hourly rate.

Out into the big wide Internet

If your ISP's Net connections are small and clogged, you can expect slow Web access, email that takes a long time to be delivered and many other problems. We run regular tests of service providers to find the fastest. See page 138 for this month's results.

Supporting the customer

Technical support is vital. You need help during the times you're on the Net. Don't be afraid to ask for the number before signing up. Give it a ring and ask them a tricky question.

Industry associations

There are a couple of Internet industry associations your ISP could join. The ISPA (Internet Service Providers Association) was set up to establish a code of practice for service providers. If you have a complaint about your service provider, you can take it to the ISPA (www.ispa.org.uk). Other service providers are members of the ISPC, a consortium of ISPs which combine their resources to provide an improved service (www.ispc.co.uk).

● Members of the ISPA are marked with an * while ISPC members have a † by their company name.

pick a provider

The most comprehensive listing of UK Internet service providers

Name	Phone	Email	Web page	Technical support	Cost (pm)	Backbone
Full UK coverage						
BowieNet	1 800 587 7827	info@davidbowie.com	www.davidbowie.com	24 hours a day	£ .75	Globa net
Breathe Online	0800 298 3030	sales@breathe.co.uk	www.breathe.co.uk	24 hours a day	from £6.99	Scottish Telecom
BT Internet	0800 800 001	support@btinternet.com	www.btinternet.com	24 hours a day	£11.75	BTnet
Cable Internet	(0500) 500 100	sales@cable.net.co.uk	www.cable.net.co.uk	9.00-21.00 every day	£11.75	Cable Internet
Cable Online	0800 052 2000	support@cableol.net	www.cableol.net	24 hours a day	£11.75	NTL Internet
Cable & Wireless Internet	(0800) 092 9001	support@mcmail.com	www.cwcom.net	24 hours a day	£10	Cable & Wireless
CableNet	(01424) 830 900	info@cablenet.net	www.cablenet.net	24 hours a day	£9.95	VBCnet
Castle.Net	(0181) 477 5623	sales@castle.net.uk	www.castle.net.uk	6.00-21.00 Mon-Fri	£8.8.	Technocom
Charis Internet Services	(0121) 248 5800	duncan@charis.net	www.charis.net	8.00-19.00 Mon-Fri 8.00-12.00 Sat	£11.75	Wisper
Cheapnet	(0990) 168 160	info@cheapnet.co.uk	www.cheapnet.co.uk	9.00-18.30 Mon-Fri	£50 pa	Carethorn
Chertsey Communications	(01344) 640 594	info@chertsey.com	www.chertsey.co.uk	9.00-22.00 every day	£11.75	Wisper VBCnet
City Netgates	(0117) 907 4000	info@netgates.co.uk	www.netgates.co.uk	8.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£ .5	Wisper
COX	(0181) 255 5151	sales@cox.co.uk	www.cox.co.uk	9.00-22.00 Mon-Fri, 12.00-18.00 Sat	£7.34	BTnet INS
ClaraNET	(0800) 358 2828	info@clara.net	www.clara.net	24 hours a day	£11.63	Netkonect INS
Cocoon Internet Services	(0171) 792 8945	admin@cocoon.co.uk	www.cocoon.co.uk	8.00-20.00 Mon-Fri, 10.00-19.00 Sat-Sun	£17.62	UUNET
Colloquium	(0500) 008 543	sales@colloquium.co.uk	www.colloquium.co.uk	24 hours a day	£ .00	UUNET
Computalynx	(01604) 231 437	sales@computalynx.co.uk	www.computalynx.co.uk	9.00-21.00 every day	£11.75	Wisper
CPD Online	0181) 446 7890	sales@cpd.co.uk	www.cyberspace.cpd.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Nildram
Cyber Guide	(01753) 891 879	sales@cyber-guide.net	www.cyberguide.co.uk	24 hours a day	£9.69	Cable Internet
Cyber Ware	(01733) 765 005	steve@cyberware.co.uk	www.cyberware.co.uk	9.00-midnight Mon-Fri	£11.74	BTnet
Cyberphone Internet	(0543) 454 840	info@cyberphone.co.uk	www.cyberphone.co.uk	8.30-18.30 Mon-Fr	£11.75	Xara
Cyberscape	(01753) 724 000	admin@cyberscape.net	www.cyberscape.net	10.00-18.00 every day	£14.10	Cable Internet
Cygnet Internet Services	(0181) 880 4650	info@cygnet.co.uk	www.cygnet.co.uk	9.00-19.00 Mon-Fr	£11.75	UUNET
D M Priest	(0161) 486 1110	support@dmpriest.com	www.dmpriest.com	24 hours call back	£8	Cable Internet
Dataline	(01252) 810 081	info@dataline.co.uk	www.dataline.co.uk	24 hours a day	£14.69	Planet Online
Demon	(0181) 371 1234	sales@demon.net	www.demon.net	24 hours a day	£11.75	Demon
Direct Connection	(0800) 072 0000	sales@dircon.net	www.dircon.net	9.00-21.00 every day	£13.50	Direct Connection
Dircon Broadcast	01232 201 555	info@dircon.net	www.dircon.net	9.00-18.00 Mon-Sat	£8.82	NTL Internet
DNA Internet Services	01604 670 717	support@dnais.com	www.dnais.com	8.00-20.00 Mon-Fri 9.00-17.00 Sat	£9.99	Cable Internet
Easynet	0171) 681 4444	sales@easynet.net	www.easynet.co.uk	24 hours a day	£11.99	Easynet / BTnet
Ecosse Telecommunications	0800) 026 7092	netsales@ecosse.tel.co.uk	www.ecosse.co.uk	9.30-17.30 Mon-Fri	£9.99	Netkonect Ecossetel
ENTANET	(0500) 368 263	info@enta.net	www.enta.net	9.00-21.00 every day	£10.58	Cable & Wireless
Enterprise	(01624) 677 666	sales@enterprise.net	www.enterprise.net	9.00-22.00 Mon-Fri 10.00-16.00 Sat-Sun	£9.40	BTnet
EntWeb	(0800) 525 470	info@entweb.co.uk	www.entweb.co.uk	8.00-22.30 Mon-Fri, 10.00-18.00 Sat 10.00-16.00 Sun	£10	Telnet
Farebase	01322) 280 011	info@farebase.co.uk	www.farebase.net	7.00-19.00 Mon-Fri 10.00-15.00 Sat-Sun	£16.45	Easynet
Force 9	(0800) 073 7800	sales@force9.net	www.force9.net	7.00-midnight every day	£5.86	Force 9
Freedom to Surf	0181 881 2111	sales@freedom2surf.net	www.freedom2surf.net	9.30-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Freedom to Surf
Frontier Internet Services	(0171) 536 9090	info@ftech.net	www.ftech.net	9.00-19.00 Mon-Fr noon-18.00 Sat	£ 70.38 pa	INS Wisper
Gemsoft	(0114) 275 7070	sales@gemsoft.net	www.gemsoft.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Sat	£12.99	Wisper / INS
Gimmel Internet	(0800) 542 5200	info@gimmel.com	www.gimmel.net	9.00-21.00 Mon-Sa	£10	Cable Internet
Global Internet	0870) 909 8041	info@global.net.uk	www.global.net.uk	24 hours a day	£11.75	BTnet GX Networks
Globewide Internet Services	(0161 953 4018	sales@globewide.com	www.globewide.com	10.00-22.00 Mon-Fri	£10	BTnet Wisper
Greenbee	(0171) 713 194.	support@gn.apc.org	www.gn.apc.org	10.00-18.00 Mon-Fr	£15.86	JUNET
Hiway	01635) 573 300	info@hiway.co.uk	www.hiway.co.uk	8.30-18.00 Mon-Fr	£14.69	GX Networks/Wisper
IBM Global Services	(0990) 426 426	global.network@uk.ibm.com	www.ibm.net	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£17.62	IBM Global Network
Icom-Web	(0800) 73. 8419	sales@icom-web.com	www.icom-web.co.uk	10.00-22.00 Mon-Fr	£9.40	Cable and Wireless
Ideal Internet Services	01942 522 333	support@idea.net.co.uk	www.idea.net.co.uk	24 hours call back	£9.50	Cable Internet
INC Internet Services	0115) 988 .880	info@inc.co.uk	www.inc.co.uk	10.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	from £7.89	INS
Intensive Networks	(01672) 511 054	sales@intensive.net	www.intensive.net	9.00-19.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Wisper
Interactive Web	(01926) 450 099	info@www.uk.net	www.www.uk.net	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£9.70	Cable & Wireless
Interalpha	(01703) 363 200	enquiry@interalpha.co.uk	www.interalpha.net	24 hours a day	£11.75	Wisper
Internet One	(018.) 941 9195	info@internet.co.uk	www.internet.co.uk	8.00-20.00 Mon-Sat	£11.75	BTnet
Intouch	0845, 606 2014	info@intouchweb.co.uk	www.intouchweb.co.uk	24 hours a day	£10	Intouch Networks
K Web	01273 763 500	info@kweb.co.uk	www.kweb.co.uk	24 hours a day	£11.69	Planet Online
KeepNet	(01869, 276 000	info@keepnet.co.uk	www.keepnet.co.uk	none	£60 pa	Carethorn
KEMAnet	(07000) 790 290	sales@kema.co.uk	www.kema.co.uk	9.00-20.00 Mon-Fri 1900-2100 Sat-Sun	£	Netkonect
Kingston Internet	(01482, 602 500	info@kingston.internet.net	www.kingston.internet.net	8.30-midnight every day	£9.75	Planet Online
LarkNet	(01638) 716 423	info@larknet.co.uk	www.larknet.co.uk	8.00-20.00 Mon-Fri 9.00-13.00 Sat	£11.75	Cable Internet
Libertynet	0800) 018 2001	customer@libertynet.co.uk	www.libertynet.co.uk	8.30-10.00 Mon-Fr 12.00-18.00 Sat	£11.75	Cable Net
London Internet	(0171) 838 1199	info@londonweb.net	www.londoninternet.ne	9.00-18.00 Mon-Sat	£11.75	Intensive Networks
London Web Communications	0800 020 8306	internet@londonweb.net	www.londonweb.net	9.00-21.00 Mon-Sat / pager Sun	£14.68	Netkonect
Madhouse Net	0800) 074 8283	info@madhouse.uk.com	www.madhouse.uk.com	8.00-20.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	NACAMAR
Mailbox Internet	(0171) 371 8558	info@mailbox.co.uk	www.mailbox.co.uk	8.00-midnight Mon-Fri	from £5.88	Netkonect
Mercia Internet	(01827) 69166	sales@mercia.net	www.mercia.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.50	Netkonect
Micromat Internet	(01933) 323 093	sales@micromat.net	www.micromat.net	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£10	Cable & Wireless
Ministry of Sound	0870) 909 8200	sales@ministryofsound.net	www.ministryofsound.net	8.30-21.00 Mon-Fri 10.00 18.00 Sat-Sun	£11.75	Global Internet
Mistral Internet	0800) 328 7253	info@mistral.uk.net	www.mistral.uk.net	9.30-17.30 Mon-Fri / 10.00-16.00 Sa.	BDJ / ISDN LLO	Mistral
Mitsubishi	0800, 226 600	enquiries@menet.net	www.menet.net	8.00-20.00 Mon-Fri, 10.00-18.00 Sat	£9.75	BTnet
Moonlight	(01276) 856 868	sales@moonlight.co.uk	www.moonlight.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£14.95	Cable Internet
Nationwide ISP	(0800) 731 6860	sales@nationwide.co.uk	www.nationwide.co.uk	24 hours a day	£7.50	BTnet
Net Quarters	(07000) 638 665	sales@not.co.uk	www.not.co.uk	9.00-20.00 every day	£11.75	Global One / Quza

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Demon	×	×	×	✓	×	£132.50	£132.50	£132.50
BT Click+	×	×	×	✓	×	£7.20	£103.68	£207.36
CWC Lite	✓	×	×	✓	×	£0	£0	£0
Freeserve	×	×	×	✓	✓	£0	£0	£0
X-Stream	×	×	×	×	✓	£0	£0	£0
FreeOnline	×	✓	✓	✓	×	**£0**	**£0**	**£0**

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Netcom Internet	0800) 980 9107	info@netcom.uk.co.uk	www.netcom.net.uk	24 hours a day	£14.95	Netcom
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	BTnet BusinessNet
[illegible]	0117 345 7777	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£11.75	Netkonect
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£11.75	Wisper VBCnet
[illegible]	[illegible]	sales@newbury.net	[illegible]	24 hours a day	£11.75	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£9.74	Wisper VBCnet
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	From £5	Nildram
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	BDC ISDN	BTnet
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£174 [illegible]	GX Networks
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£11.75	Onyx
Orchid Information Systems	01763) 244 007	Internet@orchidinfo.co.uk	www.orchidinfo.co.uk	8:30-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Cerbernet
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£9.[illegible]	Netkonect
Paston Chase	01603) 502 061	sales@paston.co.uk	www.paston.co.uk	9.00-17.00 every day	£10.58	Wisper
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	24 hours a day	£ 2.55	Easynet BTnet
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£ 4.75	UUNET
Pipemedia OnLine	01455) 828 218	sales@pipemedia.net	www.pipemedia.co.uk	24 hours a day	£11.75	VBCnet
Poptel	(0171) 923 9465	info@poptel.net	www.poptel.org.uk	9.30-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	GX Networks
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	from £3.99	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£ [illegible] 75	Portland Comms
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	24 hours a day	£ 4.[illegible]	BTnet
Prestel Online	0990) 223 300	enquiry@netsales.prestel.co.uk	www.prestel.co.uk	24 hours a day	£10.56	Scottish Telecom
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£ [illegible] 75	On Net Netkonect
Pro-Net Internet Services	0191) 200 3565	sales@pro-net.co.uk	www.pro-net.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri / 9.00-16.00 Sat	£116.33 pa	Cable Internet
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	From £10	Diamond Cable
PurpleNet	0800) 783 4535	sales@purplenet.co.uk	www.purplenet.co.uk	9.00-22.00 Mon-Fri / 10.00-18.00 Sat-Sun	£5.99	Wisper
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£11.75	NS
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£9.4[illegible]	Cable Internet
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£12.[illegible]	GX Networks Wisper
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£11.75	UUNET GX Networks
RSC Internet	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£9.95	BTnet
SAQ Network Services	0800) 358 9000	sales@saqnet.co.uk	www.saqnet.co.uk	24 hours a day	£12.50	COLT
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£1[illegible] 75	Scottish Telecom
Searley Data Services	01703) 892 351	nfo@searley.net	www.searley.net	9.00-21.00 Mon-Fri / 9.00-11.00 Sat/ 18.00-21.00 Sun	£11	Interweb
SIMNET	0800) 0745 547	sales@simnet.co.uk	www.simnet.co.uk	9.00-21.00 Mon-Fri 9.00-12.00 Sat	£9.40	Telinco Internet
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£9.99	Planet Online
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£14.69	BusinessNet
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£[illegible] 75	Extensive Networks
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£8.81	GX Networks
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	24 hours a day	£9.99	BTnet
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	From £86.95 pa	Cable & Wireless
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£5	Cable Internet
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£.5	UUNET
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£6.93	Cable Internet
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£[illegible] 75	Cable Internet
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£8.25	Cable Internet Wisper
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£.2	BTnet
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£[illegible] 75	Planet Online
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£14.[illegible]	UNet
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£11.[illegible]	Easynet
UKIP	01772) 908 000	Internet@ukip.co.uk	www.ukip.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri / 9.00-17.00 Sa 10.00-16.00 Sun	£146.87 pa	Cable Internet/NACAMAR
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	24 hours a day	£11.15	Planet Online
UUNET (Pipex Dial)	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	9.00-2[illegible] Mon-Fri 0.00-18.00 Sat	£.4.98	UUNET
Vellani Internet Services	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£9.99	Cable & Wireless
VAS-NET	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	9.00-2[illegible] Mon-F	From £4.88	VAS NET
Wave Internet	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	24 hours a day	£12	VBCnet
Webmaster	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	24 hours a day	£14.69	Planet Online
Webscape	01963) 370 800	webmaster@webscape.co.uk	www.webscape.org	24 hours a day	£141 pa	GX Networks
WinNET C[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£.7.63	UUNET
Wirenet Amiga	01925) 496 482	sales@wirenet.co.uk	www.wirenet.co.uk	9.00-19.00 Mon-Fri / 9.00-13.00 Sat	£14.25	U-Net
WISS	01248) 602 405	enquiries@wiss.co.uk	www.wiss.co.uk	9.00-22.00 every day	£11.75	Celtic Internet
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£.[illegible]	VBC Net
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£17.62	UNet
Zetnet Services	01595) 696 667	info@zetnet.co.uk	www.zetnet.co.uk	24 hours a day	£7.50	BTnet / Wisper
Zoo Internet	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	£6.95*	Zoo Internet
Zuku Internet	01494) 758 895	sales@zuku.co.uk	www.zuku.co.uk	8.00-21.00 every day	from £5	Nildram
Ireland						
Creative Online Media	01232) 370 124	info@creativeonlinemedia.com	www.creativeonlinemedia.com	8.30-17.30 Mon-Fri	BDC / SDN [illegible]	PSInet
Indigo	00353 [illegible]	info@indigo.ie	www.indigo.ie	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£ [illegible] 75	AT&T BBN Planet
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Telecom Internet	(00353) 1 269 22 22	sa es@tinet.ie	www.tinet.ie	9.30-17.30 Mon-Fri	£14.10	Telecom Eireann
The Internet Business	(01232) 424 190	info@tibus.net	www.tibus.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£8.81	BTnet
Unite Solutions	(01232) 777 338	solutions@unite.net	www.unite.net	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£12.50	BTnet
Wydeworld	(01232) 300 555	info@wydeworld.com	www.wydeworld.com	8.30-21.00 Mon-Fr	£125 pa	NTL Internet
East						
AngliaNet	01473) 211 922	[illegible]	www.[illegible].uk	8.00-21.00 Mon-Sat 11.00-19.00 Sun	£11.75	Wisper
KeConnect Internet Services	(01473) 403 020	sales@keconnect.co.uk	www.keme.co.uk	9.00-21.00 Mon-Fri 10.00-14.00 Sat-Sun	£11.75	Wisper
Net Solutions Europe	(01255) 233 300	sa es@nse.co.uk	www.nse.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£193.88 pa	Technocom
RJT Internet Services	(01493) 857 048	pos [illegible] co.uk	www.rjt.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Sat	£9.39	BTnet
London and South East						
[illegible]	[illegible]	office@a pha-access.co.uk	www.[illegible].uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Wisper
Amity Internet	(0500) 200 171	nfo@a [illegible] y.co.uk	www.amity.co.uk	8.00-19.00 Mon-Fri	£11.63	BTnet
[illegible]	[illegible]	nfo@ma [illegible] bogo.co.uk	www.bogo.co.uk	10.00-20.00 Mon-Fri 10.00-17.00 Sat-Sun	£12	BTnet
[illegible]	[illegible]	sa es@exconet.co.uk	www.exconet.co.uk	9.00-22.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	N dram
ExNet Systems	[illegible] 181) 206 5527	in o@exnet.com	www.exnet.com	10.00-m dn ght Mon-Fri	£14.10	VBCnet
[illegible]	[illegible]	in [illegible] @exnet.ne	www.flexnet.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Netcom
Inter-Computer Technology	(0171) 486 9601	sales@inctech.com	www.inctech.com	24 hours a day	£17.63	Wisper
INTERact Internet	01753) 776 699	sal [illegible] e.act.net.uk	www.interact.net.uk	24 hours a day	from £4	Cable Internet
Ka Internet Services	(01293) 416 666	sales@K2net.co.uk	www.k2net.co.uk	24 hou [illegible] day	£11.95	Nelkonect
KBnet	01234) 271 900	sales@kbnet.co.uk	www.kbnet.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Sat	£12.93	Cable e
KDD Euro Web	0800) 010 510	sales@kew.net	www.kew.net	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£17.62	Internet KDD
KENTnet Internet Services	[illegible] 622) 844 801	sa es@kentline.co.uk	www.kentnet.co.uk	9.00-21.00 Mon-Fri 9.00-17.00 Sat-Sun	£11.75	BTnet
[illegible]	[illegible]	enqu res@maidenet.co.uk	www.maidenet.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£17.63	BTnet
MetroNet	[illegible] 800) 074 1881	in o@metronet.co.uk	www.metronet.co.uk	10.30-19.00 Mon-Sat	£12.68	Quza
[illegible]	[illegible]	in [illegible] @moose.co.uk	www.moose.co.uk	8.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	BTnet
Netmania	018.) 252 1199	[illegible] @netmania.co.uk	www.netmania.co.uk	11.00-23.00 Mon-Fri	£42.50 pa	Wisper
SoftProg NET	[illegible] 1818) 788 0666	sales@softprog.co.uk	www.softprog.net	9.00-19.00 Mon-Fr	£14.10	BTnet
[illegible] Global Internet	[illegible]	[illegible] @[illegible].uk	www.[illegible].co.uk	9.00-21.00 every day	£9.99	Cable Internet
[illegible]	[illegible]	sales@uk2net.com	www.uk2net.com	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fr	from £9.69	GX Networks
[illegible]	[illegible]	info@vossnet.co.uk	www.vossnet.co.uk	9.00-19.00 Mon-Fri / 10.00-15.00 Sat	£11.75	Cable Internet
[illegible]	[illegible]	info@websurfer.co.uk	www.websurfer.co.uk	0.00-22.00 Mon-Fr	£11.75	Wisper
Midlands						
Brunel Internet	01922) 459 890	[illegible]	www.[illegible].uk	9.00-18.00 every day	£15	BTnet
Discovery	(01203) 364 400	[illegible] @discover.co.uk	www.discover.co.uk	8.30-17.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Technocom
EMNET	0115) 956 8260	enquiries@emnet.co.uk	www.emnet.co.uk	8.30-18.00 Mon-Fri	£7.82	Wisper
Fenetre	(01538) 398 798	sa es@fenetre.co.uk	www.fenet [illegible] o.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£9.40	BTnet
GMTnet	(01509) 269 999	sa es@gmtnet.co.uk	www.gmtnet.co.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fr	£11.75	BTnet
Griffin Internet	(01332) 606 160	info@griffin.net.uk	www.griffin [illegible] .uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£14.69	GX Networks
Netscafe	01242) 232 121	sa es@net [illegible] scafe.co.uk	www.netscafe.co.uk	10.00-22.00 every day	£100 pa	Wisper
Newgate Communications	0121, 327 6633	marketing@newgate.co.uk	www.newgate.co.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£12.50	Easynet
Northants Computer Centre	01604 622539	[illegible] ony@nc [illegible] net.co.uk	www.n [illegible] ccc.co.uk	9.00-21.00 every day	£11.75	Cable Internet
[illegible]	(0 15) 913 3372	sales@pr ma.ne	www.prima.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.74	Cable Internet
Skynet Internet Services	(01604) 452 245	sa es@skynet.co.uk	www.skynet.co.uk	9.00-19.00 Mon-Fri 9.00-17.00 Sat	£11.75	Cable Internet
Stayfree Internet	(0116) 291 0909	sa es@stayfree.co.uk	www.stayfree.co.uk	24 hours a day	£9.99	Wisper
The Internet in Nottingham	(0115) 956 2222	[illegible] nfo@[illegible] n.co.uk	www.[illegible] n.co.uk	10.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£14.69	Wisper
WebLeicester	0116) 223 0070	sales@webleicester.net	www.webleicester.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fr	£11.75	Cable & Wireless
WyeNet	(01989) 762 476	sales@wyenet.net	www.wyenet.co.uk	9.00-21.00 every day	£14.10	Cable Internet
North East						
FirstNet Services	0113, 294 4224	sa es@firstnet.co.uk	www.[illegible].uk	9.00-21.00 Mon-Sat	£12.50	Energis
Legend Internet	01274) 743 500	sales@legend.co.uk	www.legend.co.uk	8.00-20.00 Mon-Sat	£14.69	Sprint
NetBytes Internet	0113) 294 4273	info@netbytes.yks.com	www.netbytes.yks.com	10.00-20.00 Mon-Fri	£7.50	Sprint
North West						
Chester Internet	01244) 341 418	ken@chesternet.co.uk	www.[illegible].co.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	£11.75	GX Networks
Cybase	(0151) 227 6244	sa es@cybase.co.uk	www.cybase.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Cable Internet
Freeway Internet	01204 431 333	sales@freeway.co.uk	www.freeway.co.uk	24 hours a day	£12.95	Wisper
Kencomp Internet	01539) 722 559	info@kencomp.net	www.kencomp.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Sat	£11.75	Intensive Networks
Mersinet	0151) 475 4751	nfo@mersinet.co.uk	www.mersinet.co.uk	24 hours a day	£11.75	Wisper
Talk 21	01925) 245 145	sales@ma [illegible] k 101.com	www.a [illegible] k-01.com	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Wisper
The Internet Shop	(01253) 763 333	black-adm n@blackpool.net	www.blackpool.net	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fr	£11.75	Intensive Networks
Scotland						
Ednet	(0131) 466 7003	info@ednet.co.uk	www.ednet.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Wisper
Foremost Training	(0141) 566 6377	sales@scotnet.co.uk	www.scotnet.co.uk	8.00-17.30 Mon-Fr	£11.75	Wisper
TweedNet	(01573) 229 933	mike@scotborders.co.uk	www.sco borders.co.uk	24 hours a day	£17.63	Scot Telecom/Wisper
South Central						
Andover On-line	01264) 334 822	nfo@andover.co.uk	www.andover.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri 9.00-17.30 Sat	£12	GX Networks
Athene Internet	01329) 828 000	[illegible] dye@athene.co.uk	www.athenenet.co.uk	9.00-20.00 Mon Sat	£13.50	Wisper
Bournemouth Net	01202 292 900	sa es@bournemouth-net.co.uk	www.bournemouth-net.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Sat	£10	Quza and PSI

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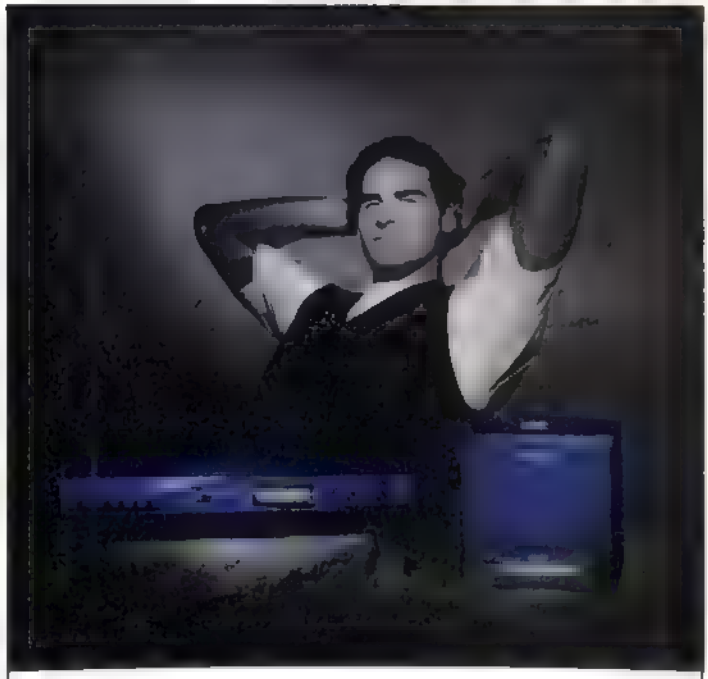

[Pride]

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LDS Technology	(01202) 659 901	sales@lds.co.uk	www.lds.co.uk	9.00-17.00 every day	£14.99	BTnet
Portsmouth Net	(01705) 420 066	sales@portsmouth-net.co.uk	www.portsmouth-net.co.uk	9.00-17.30 every day	£10	Quza
Southampton Net	(01794) 504 040	sales@southampton-net.co.uk	www.southampton-net.co.uk	9.00-17.30 every day	£10	Quza
Total Connectivity Providers	(01703) 571 300	sales@tcp.co.uk	www.tcp.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£9.99	VBC Wisper
Wales						
Cardiff Internet Services	01222) 311 3134	[illegible]	[illegible]	8.30-19.00 Mon-F 9.30-18.00 Sa	£[illegible]	N[illegible]ernet
Connect Wales Internet	(01994) 230 330	sales@connect-wales.co.uk	www.connect-wales.co.uk	8.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£11.75	Cymru Net
Cyberstop Interent Services	(01792) 465 050	[illegible]@cyberstop.co.uk	www.cyberstop.net	24 hours a day	£9.95	NTL Internet
Telecall	(0117) 941 4141	sales@telecall.co.uk	www.telecall.co.uk	10.15-17.30 Mon Fri	£11.75	BTnet Wisper
Vapro	(01792) 775 511	vapro.sales@vapro.net	www.vapro.net	24 hours a day	£10.58	Intensive Networks
Business Providers						
1st Solution Internet	0.256) 382 720	[illegible]	www.1st-solution.net	[illegible] Mon-F	[illegible]SDN LL	NS
ACE	[illegible]670) 528 204	[illegible]	www.ace.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	ISDN LL	Planet Online
Apple Centre Warrington	[illegible]0251) 444 499	sales@applecentre.com	www.applecentre.com	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	BDU ISDN / LL	Wisper
[illegible]	[illegible]	sales@bt.net	www.bt.net	24 hours a day	LL	BTnet
BusinessNet	0171) 390 9933	sales@business-net.co.uk	www.business-net.co.uk	24 hours a day	BDU ISDN LL	BusinessNet
Cerbernet	171) 360 8000	sales@cerbernet.net	www.cerbernet.net	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri, pager Sat-Sun	LL	Wisper
COLT	0171, 390 9099	[illegible]@colt.net	www.colt.net	24 hours a day	LL	COLT Internet
CommUnity Internet	1865) 856 000	info@community.net.uk	www.community.net.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	BDU ISDN LL	VBCnet Wisper
Croxsana New Media	01494) 777 999	[illegible]	www.[illegible].net	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	LL	INS
Data Link Internet	01522) 681 100	sales@data[illegible].net	www.data[illegible].net	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	LL	BTnet
Dial Internet	1372, 456 000	sales@dialin.co.uk	www.dialin.co.uk	8.30-18.30 Mon-Fri	BDU ISDN LL	BTnet
DIALnet Connect	0800) 881 881	sales@dialnet.com	www.dialnet.com	24 hours a day	BDU, ISDN LL	Cable Inet Wisper
[illegible]Mail	[illegible]	[illegible]	www.[illegible].co.uk	9.00-[illegible] Mon-Fr	ISDN LL	GX Networks
Enlnet	01243) 831 000	[illegible]	www.ep.net.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fr	BDU	GX Netwks Energis
[illegible] Web Services	[illegible]	[illegible]	www.fc[illegible].net	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	£117.50 a year	Pavillion nternet
GPL Internet Services	01232) 572 000	sales@gpl.net	www.gpl.net	9.00-20.00 every day	ISDN LL	NTL nternet
GX Networks	181) 957 1250	sales@gxn.net	www.gxn.net	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	LL	GX Networks
Hotlinks Internet Services	0181) 882 6316	webmaster@hotlinks.co.uk	www.hotlinks.co.uk	9.30-midnigh, Mon-Fri	BDU	Netkonect
[illegible] Serv	[illegible]	Sa[illegible]@[illegible]way.co.uk	www.[illegible]way.co.uk	8.00-18.30 Mon-Fri	BDU ISDN LL	VBC LeNET PSInet
ICM NetServ	0800) 614 581	sales@netserv.net	www.netserv.net	9.00-17.00 Mon-F	BDU ISDN LL	Wisper, BTnet
Impact Web Publishing	[illegible]6238) 530 000	[illegible]@impactwp.com	www.impactwp.com	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	LL	GX Networks
[illegible] Central	[illegible]	sales@netcentral.co.uk	www.netcentral.co.uk	9.00-18.00 Mon-Sat	BDU ISDN LL	Cable Internet
InterNet for Business	01224) 333 370	[illegible]@ifb.net	www.ifb.net	9.00-[illegible] Mon-Fr	BDU ISDN LL	Wisper
Internet Network Services	0800) 467 638	info@[illegible]net.net	www.[illegible].net	24 hours a day	ISDN LL	Internet Netwk Svcs
Internet Solutions for Business	01203, 633 177	sales@isfb.net	www.businesssolutions.net	24 hours a day	BDU ISDN / LL	BTnet PS net
Internet UK	0845, 070 0006	sales@[illegible]internet-uk.net	www.[illegible]internet-uk.net	7.00-midnight every day	ISDN LL	Wisper
Interweb Design	01344, 842 979	andrew@interweb.net.uk	www.interweb.net.uk	24 hours a day	BDU ISDN LL	Interweb Design
IPF.NET	0171) 213 9666	enquiries@ipf.net.uk	www.ipf.net.uk	9.00am-18.00 Mon-Fri	ISDN / LL	IPF.NET
IQ Internet	[illegible]0273) 727 088	sales@iq.co.uk	www.iq.co.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	BDU ISDN LL	Planet
[illegible]	[illegible]	barryr@ispc.net	www.ispc.net	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	LL	Cable Internet
[illegible]mmet	[illegible]	[illegible]@[illegible].net	www.[illegible].net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fr	BDU ISDN LL	BTnet
MKon	[illegible]71) 209 1515	sales@[illegible].co.uk	www.mkon.co.uk	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	ISDN LL	BTnet
NACAMAR	[illegible]438) 715 100	info@nacamar.net.uk	www.nacamar.co.uk	24 hours a day	BDU ISDN LL	NACAMAR
Netcom Internet	0800) 980 9107	[illegible]@netcom.co.uk	www.netcom.net.uk	24 hours a day	£14.95	Netcom
NetForce Group	01245) 257 788	sales@netforce.net	www.netforce.net	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	BDU ISDN / LL	Wisper BTnet
Netlink Solutions	0800) 0743 936	support@netlink.uk.com	www.netlink.uk.com	24 hours a day	ISDN	JUNET Netkonect
NORWEB.net	0800) 195 0196	sales@norwebcomms.com	www.norwebcomms.com	24 hours a day	ISDN LL	The Web Factory
NTL Internet / ENABLE	0800) 807 608	sales@ntl.com	www.ntl.com	24 hours a day	BDU ISDN / LL	NTL nternet
Odyssey Corporation	[illegible]018.) 760 7000	info@sales.odysseynet.co.uk	www.odysseynet.net	24 hours a day	BDU	Odyssey
Planet Online	[illegible]	info@theplanet.net	www.theplanet.net	24 hours a day	ISDN LL	Planet Online
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PS Net	[illegible]	sales@uk.ps.com	www.uk.ps.com	24 hours a day	ISDN LL	PS Net
Quza	0800) 528 0000	info@quza.com	www.quza.com	24 hours a day	BDU ISDN LL	Quza
REDNET	01494, 513 333	info@red.net	www.red.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	BDU ISDN LL	INS
Relay Business Systems	0345) 369 999	enquiries@relay.co.uk	www.relay.co.uk	24 hours a day	BDU, ISDN, LL	BTnet
Sandtin	[illegible]1242) 521 122	[illegible]@sandtin.com	www.sandtin.net	9.00-6.00 Mon-Fri	BDU	Netkonect
Star Planet	[illegible]	admin@starplanet.co.uk	www.starplanet.co.uk	24 hours a day	ISDN / LL	BTnet
Smartways Internet	0.004) 670 500	info@smartways.com	www.smartways.com	9.00-18.00 Mon-Fri	BDU / ISDN LL	Wisper
Star Internet	01285, 647 022	info@star.co.uk	www.star.co.uk	8.30-19.00 Mon-Fri	BDU ISDN / LL	Global One Wisper
Technocom	(01753) 714 200	sales@technocom.net	www.technocom.net	9.00-17.30 Mon-Fri	BDU ISDN LL	Technocom
The Edex Internet	(0181) 239 5000	info@edex.net	www.edex.net	24 hours a day	ISDN / LL	INS
VAS-NET	(01732) 866 529	sales@vas-net.net	www.vas-net.net	24 hours a day	BDU ISDN LL	VAS-NET
VBCnet	(0117) 929 1316	sales@vbc.net	www.vbc.net	24 hours a day	LL	VBCnet
Web Plus	0345) 932 758	sales@webplus.co.uk	www.webplus.co.uk	9.00-21.00 Mon-Fri 9.00-20.00 Sat-Sun	BDU ISDN LL	Web Ltd BTnet
Webscotland	(0.41) 418 0880	sales@webscotland.co.uk	www.webscotland.co.uk	9.00-17.00 Mon-Fri	BDU, ISDN, LL	BTnet
Wisper	(0181, 239 5008	sales@wisper.net	www.wisper.net	24 hours a day	LL	Wisper
Zen Internet	(01706) 713 714	sales@zen.co.uk	home.zen.co.uk	9.00-20.00 Mon-Fri 10.00-17.00 Sat-Sun	BDU ISDN LL	BTnet
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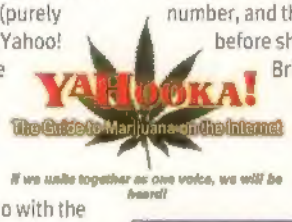
The News of the Strange

Stone the crows

Internet big boy Yahoo! seems to have got the hump with a site called Yahooka! Negotiations were still taking place when Smiley last visited the site (purely to research this story), but Yahoo! has demanded that the site close down or face its lawyers in court. Yahoo! says the problem's one of trademark infringement, but it might have more to do with the fact that Yahooka! is a directory of Marijuana-related resources. But if Yahoo!'s so upset about it all, why does a Yahoo! search still provide a direct hit to the site in question?

www.yahooka.com



Amazon sells drugs online

Sticking with drugs online for a moment, Smiley couldn't resist mentioning, without fear of legal retribution, that another Web giant, Amazon, is selling drugs over the Net. Actually it's Drugstore.Com which is selling the drugs, and they're the type of drugs you buy in a chemist's, but Amazon does own a fair chunk of the company. Not surprising when you realise Americans spend more each year on over-the-counter drugs than on books, CDs and videos combined. Drugstore.com's an odd affair – you enter your prescription details and credit card number, and they check with your doctor before shipping the order. Surely us Brits would never pass up the chace to cough and whinge at the chemist in person. Or is that just me?

www.drugstore.com

You can browse, but you can't hide

Smiley has to admit that the Net has finally become an accepted part of everyday life. I can no longer claim to be a fully-fledged member of the sad anorak club just because he knows one end of a client from the other end of a server. I knew it was all over was when I heard that Tupperware will be selling online by the end of the year. Alarmingly, Tupperware chairman, Rick Goings, has stated he "wants to reach the people who don't go to Tupperware parties". Surely there's be a law against this kind of thing?

www.tupperware.com

The Smiley guide to Internet users

No 13: Thrustworld

Age: Young enough to have quick reflexes, time to burn, and a desire to kill things. Not old enough to have a mortgage, qualifications or a beard.

Appearance: Male, withdrawn, pale from a severe lack of exposure to daylight, with red eyes and an over-developed trigger finger. Often sports death metal T-shirts, nylon pants his mum bought him, and anything with a sci-fi brand on it.

Hangouts: Bedroom, local computer game shop, sometimes ranges as far as mate's bedroom, for comparison of death tolls.

Known associates: Harg the Impaler, Zorgas the Slayer, and various other 14 year old friends.

Likes: Dreaming of Lara Croft, and did we mention killing things?

Hates: The real world, aliens, school, daylight, and not having your own 2Mb leased line connection in the bedroom.

In other words: Your typical joystick-fingering, hairy palmed adolescent who dreams of being the next Dominic Diamond.

Philosophy: Access the Net, 'Surf the Web', Kill everything that moves.

Latest fad: Force feedback joysticks for the ultimate 'alone in the bedroom' experience.

Most likely to say: "Eat laser cannon, mutant scum."

Least unlikely to say: "This game is awfully violent, I won't play it in case it twists my morals and turns me into a serial killer."

More from:

www.thrustworld.com

Bookmarks of the rich and famous...

Net celebs open up their browsers and share their bookmarks with *Internet Magazine* readers. This month it's the turn of former England Rugby Captain...

Phil de Glanville

Phil de Glanville won his first cap for the England rugby squad against the Springboks in 1992. A sometime British Lions player and England international, he went on to succeed Will Carling as England captain in 1996. He has been playing for Bath since 1990 leading them to victory over Wasps in the Pilkington Cup Final in 1995. He also happens to work for hi-tech management consultancy Druid and knows his way around the odd computer or two.

So what's so great about the Internet, Phil?

Nobody knows where its boundaries are in terms of what it can be used for as the possibilities seem limitless.

And the downside?

The biggest problem is the lack of control over the medium, on particular for the more unsavoury elements of our society to widen their networks.

So what are your favourite Web sites?

Sporting Life

www.sporting-life.com

Every person must have one sports Web site bookmarked to make sure they get all the up to the minute news, and this is mine.

Guinness

www.guinness.com

Partly because I like the product, but also because of the ingenious use of its marketing messages to guide you through when you try and log in. Definitely something for all connoisseurs of the black stuff.

Bath Rugby

www.bathrugby.co.uk

All the details you could need on this truly great rugby club, including some editorial contributions from the supporters' enclosure.

Cadbury's Chocolate

www.cadbury.co.uk

It really is hard to resist, especially with the opportunity to win a year's supply of chocolate...

Druid

www.druid.com

My absolute favourite, naturally, but what a site, phew!

Want to know more about Phil de Glanville?

Visit the Bath Rugby Club site at www.bathrugby.co.uk. You read his full biography in the players section.

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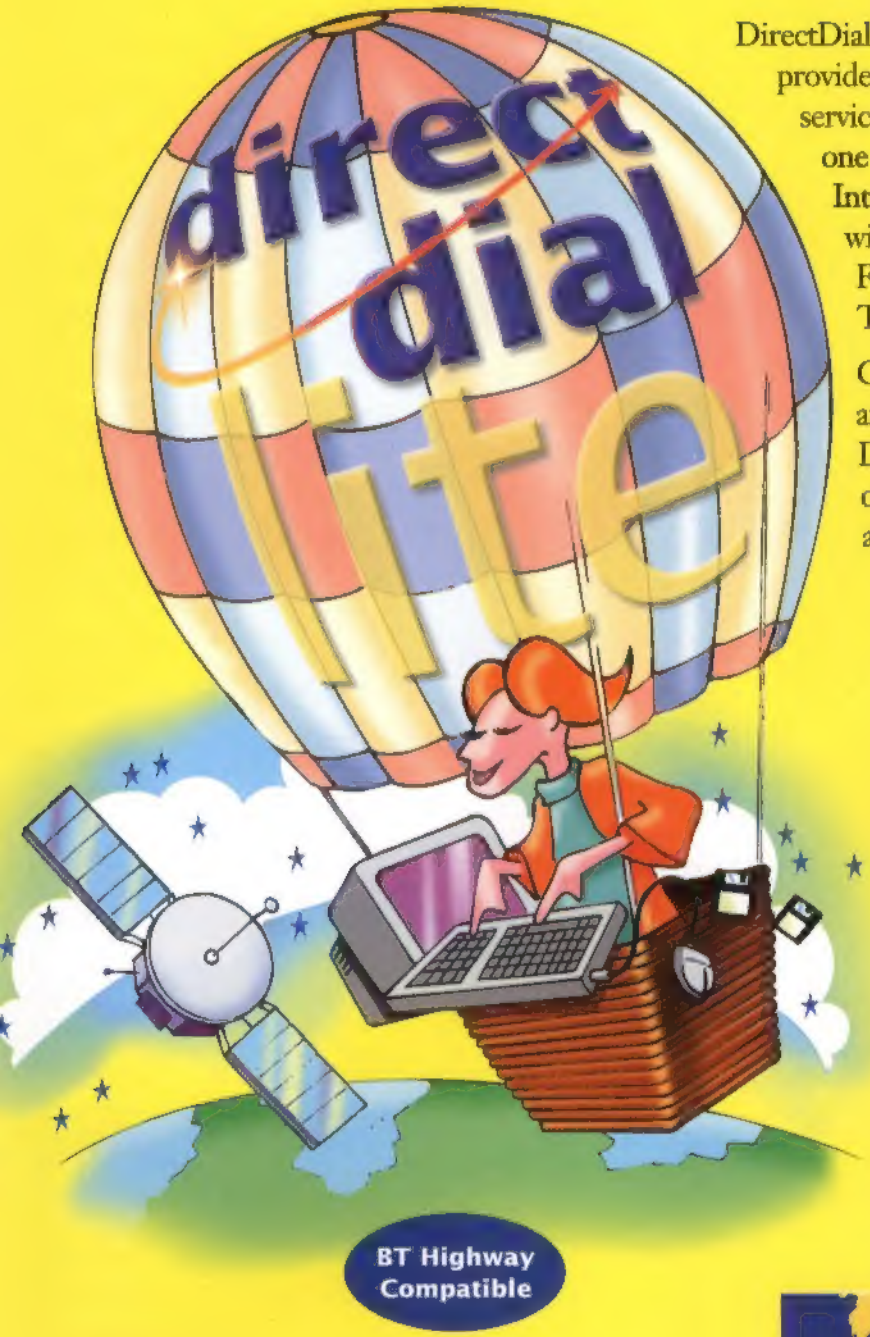

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